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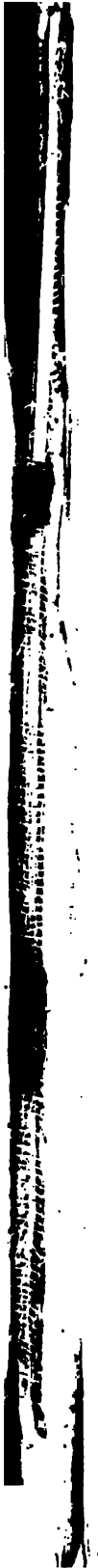
Humor, Wisdom, Pathos.

Rufus Sanders.

(FRANCIS BARTOW LLOYD)

Price, \$1.50

Wit and humor, American



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FRANCIS BARTOW LLOYD
(RUFUS SANDERS.)

SKETCHES OF COUNTRY LIFE

HUMOR, WISDOM AND PATHOS

FROM THE

"SAGE OF ROCKY CREEK"

*The Homely Life of the Alabama Back Country Has Its Sunny Side:
Rough But Wise and Kindly Talk*

SELECTIONS FROM THE WRITINGS OF
FRANCIS BARTOW LLOYD
("RUFUS SANDERS")

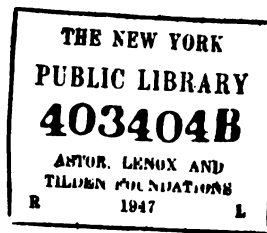
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To the Memory

OF ONE WHOSE LOVE FOR THE LOWLY AND THE HUMBLE, WHOSE
FIDELITY TO TRUTH AND HONOR, WHOSE SYMPATHY WITH
ALL THINGS GOOD ARE EMBODIED IN THESE PAGES;
WHOSE SUNNY NATURE LIT ALL THE PATH-
WAY OF HIS LIFE WITH GENTLE
RADIANCE, BLESSING THOSE
WHO WALKED BESIDE HIM; WHOSE GENTLE HUMOR BEAMED SO KINDLY
ON THE FAULTS AND FOLLIES OF THE WORLD THAT IT SHONE
THROUGH TEARS OF TENDERNESS FOR ALL WHO SUFFERED
OR WERE WRONGED; TO THE MEMORY
OF MY HUSBAND THIS BOOK OF SELECTIONS FROM HIS WRITINGS IS

Dedicated

AS A TRIBUTE OF WIFELY DEVOTION FROM HER WHO KNEW
HIM BEST, AND WHO WOULD KEEP IN BLOOM UPON
HIS GRAVE THAT "WHITE FLOWER OF A
STAINLESS LIFE" WHICH SO BECAME
HIM IN THE WEARING IT.

LILY C. LLOYD.

Index - Apr. 26, 1947

CONTENTS.

CHAPTER.	PAGE.
Introductory	7
I. A Visit to the Old Home	11
II. The " Guidin " Influence of Apron Strings	18
III. The Bicycle	24
IV. " Fresh from Georgy "	27
V. There Are Boys and Boys	30
VI. The Old Gray Horse	37
VII. How Blev Scroggins' " Slate " Went Through	43
VIII. A Christmas Story	50
IX. " Roundin Up at the Old Lick Log "	57
X. The Saddest Case in Rocky Creek	65
XI. The Courtin Matin Season	71
XII. The Farmer and the Broncho	76
XIII. A Dog Fall with a Texas Liar	79
XIV. Rocky Creek Philosophy	85
XV. Rev. Zeb Newton's Career	91
XVI. Politics on Panther Creek	97
XVII. Andy Lucas' and Blev Scroggins' Philosophy	103
XVIII. Rufus Sanders' Maiden Speech	110
XIX. Uncle Billy Hornady in Politics	115
XX. A Political Difference with Sandy Wickenton	120
XXI. Aunt Nancy Newton's Philosophy	133
XXII. Andy Lucas and his Mule Dollie	139
XXIII. Aunt Nancy on " Women Votin "	144
XXIV. Family Records, Pedigrees and Tombstones	148
XXV. Christmas in the Good Old Way	155

CHAPTER.	PAGE.
XXVI. How Rufus Lost His Girl.....	163
XXVII. Calico Jim and the Peddler.....	169
XXVIII. Mises Garner and Her Soft Soap	175
XXIX. "Drinkin" and How to Quit.....	179
XXX. The Natural Increase.....	186
XXXI. Soft Settin Down Places.....	190
XXXII. A Few Fatherly Lines.....	196
XXXIV. Stands by the Old Farm.....	203
XXXV. Bad Luck and Hard Times	208
XXXVI. A Wonderful Boy Preacher	213
XXXVII. Rufus Goes to College.....	219
XXXVIII. Old Man Sandy and the Baby	226
XXXIX. Rufus Believes in Luck	232
XL. The Deceitfulness of "Figgers"	239
XLI. On Huckleberry Ridge.....	247
XLII. A Sunday Sermon	253
XLIII. How to "Wean" a Man	257
XLIV. A Letter to the President.	263
RAKINS AND SCRAPINS.....	271



INTRODUCTORY.

Had the author of these sketches lived, he would himself have selected the very best of all his writings and given them to the public in the enduring form of a book. Perhaps he would have left out some here presented, choosing others that more completely reflect the bent of his own mind and appeal more directly to that public which he so thoroughly understood. The sad, though engaging, task of culling out from several hundred sketches the comparatively few contained within the compass of this single volume, was left for those who appreciated his work and were nearest to him in life. Some dozen or more were known by his immediate family as his favorites and are here embodied. The literary productions of Mr. Lloyd had three leading characteristics—humor, sense, pathos: the gentle humor of a heart in love with all about it; the sense that finds no description half so apt as to call it “homely wisdom”; the pathos always trembling on the lip that laughs whole-heartedly at the foibles of mankind. All of these are fairly represented in this memorial volume of his work and worth, and we lay it before the public believing that through the unnumbered years to come, no eye will ever peruse its pages but some heart is better, or happier, or wiser for the reading.

In dealing with a personality so interesting, so promising, and already so fruitful, some more extended space is needed than the narrow limits of this “introduction.” But the reader will expect at least the prominent facts in the life of a young Alabamian, who, at the age of thirty-six, had already achieved a lasting literary fame, and at his death had the highest political honors well within his grasp. Francis Bartow Lloyd was born in the good old county of Lowndes, in Alabama, on the 12th day of August, 1861, near the little village of Mount Willing. His parents were members of large and influential families, and the best blood of that substantial and cultivated section of the state

was his by inheritance. His father, Dr. C. C. Lloyd, survives him. His mother, who was Miss Sue M. Lee, has been dead for many years. His birth-place was a farm house, his boyhood was spent on a Butler county farm, his character and sympathies were moulded by the farm life, and his memory will always be associated with the manners and the sayings of that homely country folk, who still constitute the backbone of the population of his native state.

He grew up amid the straitened circumstances that were so universal in the reconstruction times, and with the exception of a year at the Greenville Academy he had no opportunity for learning beyond the three months between the work seasons at the neighboring country school. But he developed a literary turn, and fortunately inherited the resoluteness of purpose and the solidity of character to work out his young ambitions into practical success. He contributed youthful poems and fragments to the local papers, and at the age of twenty began the study of law in the office of J. C. Richardson, Esq., in Greenville. The taste for literary work predominated, however, and the next year found him a reporter on the "Morning Times" at Selma, Alabama. He worked hard and studied hard, quickly learned the details of the business, threw off the boyish exuberance of an unformed style, became city editor and a recognized rising young man. While with the "Times" he made his first great hit as an orator at a banquet given by the citizens to the State Medical Association then in session at Selma. In response to the toast to the "Press," he made the speech of the evening. It was, indeed, almost a leap to fame, for the capture of such an audience meant the singing of his praises to all parts of the state.

Young Lloyd remained in Selma three years, and then joined the "Montgomery Advertiser" as city editor. It was a broader field and he improved it. He was scrupulously correct in his habits, laborious and absolutely trustworthy in all his work. He made friends and kept them. He was gentle as a woman, keenly alive to everything humorous, himself a most delightful narrator of funny anecdotes, courageous, modest, a good member of the Baptist church, a thorough-paced democrat, self-possessed,

and equally at home with the man of consequence and the everyday citizen, in love with life and determined to make the most out of it. Soon after coming to Montgomery, in 1886, he married Miss Lily Carter of Butler Springs, a young lady whose virtues and accomplishments were companioned by a form and feature of rare grace and loveliness, and four children were the result of this uninterruptedly happy union. He was eminently a domestic man in all his tastes, and his home was the center of his thoughts. To his love of home, of his own roof-tree and his own fireside, we owe the specialty of the "RUFUS SANDERS" letters. He objected to the routine of a morning newspaper because it kept him away from home. As a matter of pleasure, he early began to write special contributions, in a style more or less homely, for the Sunday issue of the paper. They were successful, and he soon saw that in the development of his talents along this line lay his pathway to independence. His eye was caught by the quaint, but thoroughly wholesome and manly face of a Montgomery county farmer, Mr. Geo. S. Morrison. He adopted this gentleman's photograph as his ideal for the face and form of a sound and common-sense countryman, called him "Rufus Sanders," and made this simple name for the quaint-faced old tiller of the soil a synonym for household philosophy in many thousand American homes. The "RUFUS SANDERS" sketches soon brought him an income that made him independent of the newspaper grind. There seems never to have been a time when his hopes of happiness did not center in a home on a little farm of his own. He talked it from the time the writer of these lines first knew him as a reporter in Selma. The "RUFUS SANDERS" letters did for him what the labor of so few men in this world ever does accomplish—they enabled him to realize his ideal. There is nothing more pathetic in all the lives of all the men who have lived by the pen than this simple statement and its outcome: "He had realized his ideal." A few brief years in that little farmhouse of his own in Butler county, and the ideal and the real were both for him as if they had never been. He was assassinated on the afternoon of August 25, 1897, as he drove homeward to the wife and children who waited for his coming at the little farm.

A brief allusion to his political career, and the reader may pass on to the heart of the book. In the session of 1890-91 Mr. Lloyd represented Montgomery county in the lower house of the General Assembly. He removed to Elmore county in 1893 and spent a year, and then to that long cherished and dreamed of nest of his own in Butler county. He had participated actively in all the political canvasses since 1890, speaking from the same stump with the most eminent men of the day. In culture he was not deficient. In eloquence, when he chose, he was beyond most political speakers. In his knowledge of the country folks he was profound, and was a growing power. He was second in the race for the nomination for Secretary of State by the Democratic State Convention of 1894. In 1896 he came for the second time to the General Assembly, now representing Butler. In opposition to a Constitutional convention, he made the best speech by any member on any theme during the entire session. His course and his work in that session of 1896-7, so strengthened him in the esteem of men who shape public affairs in Alabama, and so popularized him with the people at large, that only his untimely taking off prevented his nomination for Secretary of State, by the coming convention of 1898. This honor was a dear and cherished ambition. Who in all Alabama will be found to deny it had been fairly won? Alas! That he did not live to wear it.

CHAPPELL CORY.

March 14, 1898.

SKETCHES OF COUNTRY LIFE.

CHAPTER I.

A VISIT TO THE OLD HOME.

More than probably every man has got a warm soft spot in his heart for the place where he was born and bred and brung up. There is somethin kinder soothin and tender like in his feelins when he looks back with his mind at the old home, where he first saw the light and lifted up his voice.

A man can go on and git rich and run for Congress and make a big name for himself, but he never can git over his early raisin. He may live in town and have a fine house, with green bay windows and lightnin rods on it, but sometimes the old home will loom up before him. It don't make any difference whether it is one of these clumsy old brown houses, with a cellar and a garret, with stick chimneys and shed rooms—it beats a stone front out of hearin when it comes to standing up and staying with a man.

And it don't make any difference how high up he climbs or how busy he gits, that old home will slip up on him when he aint thinkin about it. If he shuts his eyes and hardens his heart and keeps it out all day, it will steal in and smile at him when he sleeps and dreams. And every time it comes and goes it makes his heart beat more faster and furious, and leaves a little achin spot in his throat.

No sir, you needn't to try to git clean, clear away from the old home cause it aint no use tryin. You can shake the partin hand with old friends and move your washin off to a strange country if you want to. You can leave the old stompin grounds and play quits with the little girl that use to live over the creek and went to school with you up at the Cross Roads. But the old home will be with you off and on to the end. Maybe you

can forget the checked homespun apron and the pink sunbonnet and the pritty blue eyes, and all that. But every now and then somehow the old home will come slippin up out of the past, smilin sweet and tender like, it seems, and sayin, "HERE I AM."

PLUM RIGHT AND BEAUTIFUL.

But at the same time it don't seem to me like it is anything uncommon queer for the old home to stand up and stick out and live on and on in a man's thoughts and dreams till presently it comes to be a part and parcel of his bein. It is so natural and easy. It looks plum right and beautiful to me.

Didn't you never notice that a mockin bird will build her nest in the same old tree every spring, year in and year out? When the evenin stars sing together and the night comes flut-terin down, don't the chickens come home to roost? You can take a horse and blindfold him and ship him off to some other state, but the first time somebody leaves the gate open he will kick up his heels and strike a bee-line for his old home.

Our old dog Jack knows where the cold grub comes from. He has seen his best days long ago, and I reckon he is now about the most ugliest dog in the settlement, but he has got sense like folks. Some seven or eight years ago old Jack got into a rough and tumble fight with a big bench-legged coon, and the coon scratched one of his eyes out and left a blue streak in the other. Since that time he can't see much above his feet after dark. He was out huntin one night last spring and got lost and turned around and couldn't find his way out of the woods. He set up a powerful disturbance and I had to go down in the swamp after him. When I found him he was hunkered down by a big hollow tree, moanin and howlin and takin on like his last friend was dead and his old heart was broke. When we got back home and old Jack got straightened out with himself and the surroundins he was so glad and proud and cut up so many new motions till Mother thought he must of been snake-bit and was goin into spasms.

But old Jack was only actin what he felt and couldn't say, and when he curled his tale and stiffened his backbone and wob-

bled around to the kitchen window he was sayin as plain as anybody could say it without talkin right out: "There Is No Place Like Home."

From that day till this old Jack has not been outside of the back yard, and I reckon the only way I will ever git him off of the place again will be to load a cannon with him and shoot him off.

TWO OF A KIND.

Me and our old dog Jack are two of a kind in one thing—we are both of the home, homely.

I reckon it must of been seventy-five or a hundred years ago, when my good old father stopped his covered wagon and took the oxen out way down on Panther Creek. There he made his clearin and built a cabin—built it with his own hands, and covered it with pine boards, and daubed it with mud—and there is where I was born and came up till I was big enough to wiggle for myself and do my own swimmin without gourds.

When we first moved away from the old place and made a landin in the settlement where I have been livin from that day till now, I was a stroppin fine youngster, with girls on my mind and a few stray whiskers on my face. But I got powerful down in the mouth and homesick. It was from along about the first hog-killin season till way after Christmas that I couldn't do nothin but go creepin and mopin around like a yearlin calf with the hollow horn.

Three or four years further on I took a trip down on Panther Creek and Mother changed her name to Sanders and come back home with me. Gradually by degrees after that I settled down in the way I had to go and got sorter weaned off from the Panther Creek range, as I thought, for good and all. But every now and occasionally the old place would float up before my eyes—particular soon in the mornin or along in the shank of the evenin—and I could see the smoke curlin up and the pigeons swoopin down, and hear the boys whistlin and the turkeys struttin and the calves bawlin and the bees hummin and the birds singin, and by gum it seems to me like that was about the softest and sweetest music I ever heard in all my born days. Maybe then some-

times in my dreams I would see the old log house—two big rooms with a wide, cool passway between, and shed rooms for we boys—and when I would wake up and come back to my right mind my heart would be prancin and bumpin around like forty rats in a meal barrel, and I could feel that same funny sort of hurtin down in my heart.

THE HOME FEELIN GROWS.

As the years come around and went by it looks like I got better and then worse. That old home feelin would creep up like a buck ager and then wear off about the same way. But of late years it took to growin on me more frequent and serious. The spells would come thicker and faster and stick closer and stay longer, till by-and-by I felt like I had about got to a stoppin place. I was good and hungry for one more look at the old home, and I made up my mind to go and have it, if it took me a month and raised another rumpus in the family.

That night I dreamt pleasant dreams and slept the sleep of the just, and the next day I told Mother that I had my pegs all down and my heart set for a visit back to the old place down on Panther Creek. She would be more than glad to go with me, she says, if it was only so she could, but anyhow she was willin for me to go. She was thinkin I might find things turned around and changed about so till I wouldn't hardly know the country, but still she wouldn't argufy me out of makin the trip.

HAPPY ON THE WAY.

So I packed my saddle bags and got everything ready the over night, and by the crack of day the next mornin I was straddle of the old gray and he was headin straight for Panther Creek.

A horse that can untie his legs in a good, swingin fox-trot will put a long road behind him in a day, and when the sun went down I was takin my saddle off at the Weatherford place forty miles away. I passed the night with Bunk Weatherford and his folks, and we stayed up till late swappin lies about this thing and that, and talkin over old times.

Bunk has got Miss Tildy Brittenham, as she used to be, for

a wife, and I was sociable with her when she was a right young thing. I use to cut the pigeon wing around Miss Tildy some myself, and at that time she was one of the likeliest young girls in the settlement; but somehow she never could see how it would be a good plan for her to git mixed up with the Sanders family. Now she has got so many children and grand-children till she has to stop and set down to count them, and so after all I reckon the good Lord knows what is best.

Another good day's ride brought me to the old Panther Creek settlement and I spent that night with the Callins folks in two miles of the place where I grewed up. The next day Hiram Callins went with me and we walked over to the old place.

NOW AND THEN.

In my own mind I had the old home fixed up exactly like it looked when we moved out, but I reckon I must of forgot that time don't stop and wait for nothin, and all things change in this vain and fleetin world. Mother was right. When I got back to the old family lick log I found things powerful changed around.

Everything had been moved out or moved in or either moved off, or anyhow that was the general appearment to me. The woods has moved off and the fields had moved up. The lot had moved away and a turnip patch had moved around in its place. I ambled off down to the branch where me and the other boys use to go fishin Saturday evenins and wade in the shallow places and build flutterin mills. I found the branch, but it looks monstrous little and dried up, and seems like it had moved further up the road.

Then I went over to the old millpond, where we use to go in washin and I learned to swim, first with gourds and then without them. The pond didn't look more than about half as big and wide and deep and dangersome as useit to, and I asked Hiram if somebody hadn't been movin the old puddle up closer to the house.

"Not as anybody knows of, Rufe," says he laughin fit to kill himself. "She gits full and runs up and slops over sometimes after the spring freshets, but I never heard tell of anybody

movin her around any, and if such a thing had been goin on I reckon I would of got some wind of it. She was right here when me and you and Tom Dick Simpkins used to run away every Sunday and come down here to knock off the dust and cobwebs, and so far as I know she is still sleepin in the same old bed."

When we got back to the house I went around in the back yard to see if anybody had been movin the well. It was there at the same place, but the old windlass was gone, and when we wanted some fresh water we had to draw it with a wheel and chain and two buckets instid of one. Nothin didn't look natural and right but the old house itself. After weatherin the storms and breastin the sunshine for more than fifty years, it looks about the same as it did when we moved away from Panther Creek, and pritty much like it did the last time I saw it in my dreams.

The folks now livin at the old place want up to the Sanders stripe and I had to go back home with Hiram that night, but it was goin dead against the game. The weather was threatnin and all of a sudden like I was taken with a strong hankerin to sleep in the little shed room around on the south side. I was jaded and leg weary, and I felt like if I could but only go to bed in that room and hear the rain on the roof I could sleep a whole entire week hand runnin.

ON THE BACK TRAIL.

Me and the old gray made a straight shoot for our other home the next day, and now I am about half glad and about half sorry that I ever went back to the old place. I don't feel right exactly as young and fresh and bloomin since I got back as I did before I started. It leaves a man with his thinkin clothes on to go off and find so many changes in a bunch, and then run up with somebody's grandmother that use to be his sweetheart.

But it is no use talkin, I had to take one more look at the old place, and I have been livin in this country long enough to find out that the most easiest and quickest way to git there, is to hit the grit and pull out and go.

Now of course it would be all vanity for a man that has come as far along into the vale of years and tears as I have to

pitch out and go to playin boy again. But it don't hurt nothin, I reckon, for a man to go over the old trompin ground once more and think about the close places he has come through and the good times he has had. It puts him in mind that the sun goes swingin on to the Western hills, and after the gold of evenin will come the dusk of night.

CHAPTER II.

THE "GUIDIN" INFLUENCE OF APRON STRINGS.

Bless the Lord for apron strings. They are somethin that has their place on the list of necessities in every well regulated family. The country wouldn't be safe without them. The world needs them in its business.

Man, that was born of woman, loves to talk big and fly high and call himself bull of the woods, but he couldn't git along without the gentle, guidin influence of somebody's apron strings. He may have everything his own way in the Beat meetin, wipe the face of the earth off with his political enemies and run the government accordin to his own notions, but, when he comes up home and goes to prancin around like he owned the country with a ten rail fence around it, a strong steady pull on the apron strings of the establishment will put the fixments on him and bring him to his knittin, and make him meek and gentle as any little kitten. I am writin now as a man up a tree, speakin forth nothin but words of truth and soberness. I have been right along there myself and I know how it is. I have seen the beauty of the brickwork with my own eyes, and seein is believin.

DON'T CUT THE STRINGS.

As one who has grown old and ugly and bald in everyday contact with this vain and fleetin world, I want to say to the he-division of the risin generation, don't cut the apron strings. If you do, you won't be sorry for it but once, and that will last always. The good horse ain't ashamed of the bridle that he wears, and you needn't to be ashamed of the apron strings. They have kept many a man from goin feet foremost to the devil and the dogs. They have pulled many a sot and loafer in out the wet and made a good citizen outen him. They have done more than all the laws and courts of the land to hold up the public peace and dignity and keep this old world swingin along in the straight and narrow way.

It is a risky and dangerous business, cuttin apron strings is.

It is a blame sight worse than havin the measles and cuttin stomach teeth. Jest keep your eye on the fellow that tries it, and its dollars to peanuts that he will gum up the cards and be eatin feathers before the game is out. He may make a landin in the penitentiary. He may run to whisky and fill a drunkard's grave, or some other long-felt want, and then again he may jest peter out and cave in and fade away without much tryin. But it aint a bit probable that he will ever git to be Governor of the State, or either go to Congress.

To be plain and honest about it, we men folks are generally mighty small potatoes and blame few in the hill, anyhow. We think the plan of the government would go all to smash and smithereens if we want runnin the machinery, but the truth of the business is, if it want for the apron strings to hold us down and keep everything in its right and proper place, the whole entire country would be a waste howlin wilderness before breakfast in the mornin.

A BOY THAT TRIED IT.

When I was a youngster I knowed a boy that cut his mother's apron strings, and he paid about the regular price for the goods, too. Jimmy Pickens was his name, a son of old Tommy Pickens, and a younger brother to Will and Tom. Now Jimmy's mother (she was one of the best old souls that ever breathed the breath of life or took a dip of snuff in our settlement), use to keep a herd of geese. Soon every mornin she would send Jimmy and another little nigger to drive the geese down to the paster. They had to cross the big spring branch, and Jimmy and the nigger had a way of wadin in the water right constant every day. Then they would go home and when the old lady got after them about bein wet up to the middle Jimmy he would up and say, says he :

" Well maw, you made us go off with the old geese to the paster, and we had to run through the grass and dew after them, and how could we help from gittin wet?"

His mother didn't take the yarn about the dew and the grass exactly like he gives it to her, but she didn't have no dead sure proof, and so she lets things rock along so till further notice.

One mornin Jimmy and the other little nigger went off with the geese to the paster, waded the branch and come up wet as usual, if not some wetter. The old lady had been out about the garden, it seems, and she knowed there want no dew on the grass. The overnight was windy and there didn't any dew fall.

Jimmy he want keepin such close track of the weather, and he goes on to put up the same old tune about him and the nigger runnin after the geese through the grass and dew and gittin their clothes wet up to their galluses. Whereas the old lady got a big handful of peach tree sprouts and gives both of them a good, old-fashion thrashin.

The next thing anybody knowed, little Jimmy Pickens comes up missin. He cut the apron strings, run away from home and went off to the city to breathe the air of individual liberty and American independence. But he soon found out that he couldn't git along handy without clean clothes and kitchen physic. So he pulled for home, and when he got nearly there he made a little circuit around by the paster. He found the same little nigger there tendin to the geese and he sent him to the house with a note, which the same runs this a way:

"Dere Maw: Pleeze send me one piece of sope and some cloes; also my old Sunday shoes and a pare of socks. I have got a hat."

"Yours in Rags and Sorrer,"

"JIMMY."

There was one winnin pint you notice about little Jimmy. When he found out that he was wigglin on the wrong road he comes to his senses like the projeckin son, stopped and argified with himself a while, and then turned around and come back to the old lick log.

ANOTHER SAMPLE CASE.

And there was Newt Callins, the fiddler. He was another one of your fellows that makes out like he couldn't stand the apron strings for a check rein, but when they was cut he soon found out that all was vanity and vexation of spirit. And he didn't do the clippin act, neither. It come around about this way:

Newt was about the sorriest white man that ever made a

track or flung a card in the settlement. The boys use to say he was a fiddler from Fiddler's Green, and he did drag a right nasty bow. He could play the fiddle and sing funny songs and swap horses and tell smutty yarns, but that was about all. He didn't take to work a single bit, sayin how he was a born genius and didn't have to work. He was also a natural born loafer. He want worth his weight in sap saw dust, and the general wonderment was that he could have the big lazies continually all the time and still keep out of the poor house.

After while it comes to pass that Miss Elvira Griffin took it into her head to pull Newt in out of the wet and make somethin out of him. It was plum agreeable with Newt, cause he was only layin around waitin for some good woman to take him under her protectin wing, and the fact that Miss Elvira was a old maid with red hair and freckled face and one glass eye didn't jar his hand none at all. Her folks was all dead and gone, and she owned the old Griffin place all in her own name. So they pitched in and got married and went to hangin their clothes on the same peg.

Mother sticks to it that weddin matches was made in Heaven, but I have right serious doubts about that sometimes. Maybe it ain't right square in keepin with a man's religious duties to say so, but I never could git it through my hair that the good Lord had anything to do with the match that made one flesh and one blood out of Newt Callins and Elvira Griffin. Cause why? Well, it was about the bunglesomest job that I ever saw turned out, and the good Lord dont botch things up that a way. He never did and he never will. Everything that he does is bound to be plum right and proper, and the best that can be done.

Now, Miss Elvira want to say pritty, but she was good and sweet, and she would of made one of the best wives in the world if she only had of been hooked up with a man that was half way fitted for a husband, but she made a reglar mess of it in marryin Newt Callins. She didn't know what a great big job of nothin she was bitin off till it was everlastinly too late.

IT WANT NO USE.

Things moved along tolerable smooth and easy over at the Griffin place that winter, and the followin spring Newt took hold

of the farm and put in a big crop. It now begins to look like Miss Elvira was goin to keep her word and make somethin out of him, and everybody was powerful glad to hear it.

But it seems like Newt's smart fit didn't last very long. He wore it off by degrees, and along in May and June, when the sun got to shinin hot and the crop was movin off right promisin, he played clean out again. He comes up for the score in good shape and got away like there was something in him, but then he went to pieces and flew the track before he got to the second quarter pole. He took to fiddlin and foolin off his time as constant and reglar as ever. He turned the stock out to graze and let the grass run away with the crops.

Miss Elvira she talks to him, easy and gentle like at first, about his idlesome ways, and worried along with him the best she could, tryin to get him to cut the cards some more and play the game different. But it want no use. Every time she tried to reason and argify with him he gits mad and would kick and cavort and flourish around like unto a young bay steer. He want goin to take no petticoat rule and apron strings in his. He would like to know who was wearin the breeches of that concern anyhow?

SHE CUT THE STRINGS HERSELF.

It didn't look right and natural that Miss Elvira would set down peaceable and quiet and see everything on the place goin to rack and ruin without raisin a rumpus about it. So one bright and pleasant summer day she rolls up her sleeves and went out on the back porch, where Newt was playin his fiddle to beat Bobtail, and cut the tune off right short, sayin how she wanted to have a little private talk with him.

"Newton Callins," says she, "I reckon its about time me and you was comin to a family understandin. I have put up with your triflin, worthless, wastin ways jest about as long as I can stand it. I have talked and talked, and worried and worried with you till talkin and worryin aint in my line any longer. Look at the crops on this place! You can't see the corn and cotton for the hog weeds and the crab grass. But you go right on sawin on that old fiddle and runnin off to every picnic and

kerdo you can hear of. We have got to the quittin pint now. We have come up to the fork of the road this mornin, Newt. You can go your way and I'll go mine. You are always growlin and grumblin about petticoat rule and apron strings, and I am going to let you go out like you come in. Pack your wallett now, and take your old fiddle and hit the grit. The apron strings is cut, the front door is wide open, and there is the big road out there. Put your foot in the middle of it and move your washin to some other shanty. Go in peace, and don't you never come back here no more. Henceforwards and forever after this I am goin to run the farm and wear the breeches of this concern."

AND NEWT HE WENT.

When the pinch comes Newt didn't much want to go, but he went. He wanted to talk back some, but he dassent do it. There was fire in Miss Elvira's eyes, as well as her hair, and she comes from good fightin stock, too. Newt knowed it was a mighty good time of year for him to say nothin. So he put a button on his lips and held his tongue and toted the mail. Miss Elvira sailed in and hired a man to work out the crop, and after that she runs the old farm to suit herself. She was about the best business man in them parts and when ever she got worked up to the stickin pint somethin had to happen. She holds her place on the old maid list yet but she is livin in peace and plenty all the time now.

How about Newt? Well, to be certainly he didn't pan out anything worth countin. He went on from bad to worse, and a heap more of it. From playin the fiddle and playin cards, he got to drinkin very hard and lyin and stealin, and playin the devil in generally. The last time I heard from him he had jined the chain gang for ridin off on a horse that belongs to some other man, and if he has ever unjined himself, its more than I know.

But Newt only took the wide and easy road that me and you, maybe, would be travelin this blessed Sabbath day if the apron strings was cut and we could have all the rope we want. Like the base Indian, he throwed away the main chance, and after that all the lock chains and scotches and holdin back strops in the county could't save him from the smash up.

Bless the Lord for apron strings.

CHAPTER III.

THE BICYCLE.

When Billy George Bogin come by our house on Saturday evenin before the last third Sunday on his return back home from a big picnic they had that day over at Tankersly's Station, I couldn't help from feelin sorry for the boy slap down to the bottom of my heart.

The few remainin clothes which Billy George had on, the shape and color of his homely countenance, and a badly left and lonesome look in his eye give him all the general outward appearances of a young man who had swum the snaggy fork of Salt creek where the water was ragin high and muddy.

"Where have you been, Billy George?" said I: "where have you been, charmin Billy?"

"There was two town girls come down to the station and tended the picnic," says Billy George—which I had my private opinions right then touchin the great gobs of fun the boys had that day. "And let me tell you, Uncle Rufus, they was pretty as red shoes and blue stockings—but hot stuff and a heap of it.

"You must recollect I never have took my stand and made my final restin place around in the calico corner, but when them two town girls come and picked me out for a native born idiot and put in to have some fun they couldn't see the snags ahead. They had their fun, I reckon, but I hadn't went off nowheres and I got my share whilst the show was goin on.

"One of them girls had fetched a wheel, as she called it, and nothin would do, but I must ride the blame thing. I told her I had rid most anything from a buckin mule to a long-horn steer, and I would do my level durndest to ride anything that anybody else had ever rid. In the main time I had saw the girl mount her wheel and go spinnin and flyin around the picnic grounds as smooth and easy as fallin off a wet log—which I didn't have no better sense than to think it was as easy as it looked. And it stood plum reasonable with me that if a gay and gorgeous girl—with all her frills and fixments and riggings on—

could ride the thing so graceful like and easy, it would be still more easier for a boy like me, with only a few plain clothes on, to 'make the mount and scorch the wind,' as she called it.

"So consequentially I made the mount. But I didn't burn any wind to speak of. The blame thing flew up behind and before at the same time, and instid of scorchin the native air I plowed a hole three feet long in the fair bosom of the native earth with my own native face. Them town girls made out like they was tremendius sorry—which at the same time they laughed and cackled and cackled and laughed till blamed if one of 'em didn't jest simply fall down and wallow in it. Well, I jined in with 'em and laughed some at my fool self and made out like it didn't hurt much.

IN THE GRAPEVINE SWING.

"After that," says Billy George with an able-bodied twinkle in his eye, "I didn't have a blame thing to do but hang around and let them town girls ride their own wheel and have their own fun. Dadblame 'em, I knowed their time was comin.

"First thing after dinner we went off down on the creek to the grapevine swing under that big beech tree. One of the girls lowed she had read somethin in a book oncst upon a time about swingin in a grapevine swing and she was most cràzy to see how it would feel. The other one was more than willin providin I would swing with 'em and the vine was plenty strong to hold up with three. Now as for me I had on my Sundayest clothes, and I didn't have no wild romantic notions about how it would feel to be swingin in the grapevine swing back and forth across the widest place in the creek. I was pluperfectly satisfied that somethin would come to pass with them two town girls before the sun went down with a bobtail flush behind the western hills, and I lowed their time was comin now presently.

"But nothin else would do, and ruther than bust up the show and spile the fun, I went on across with the girls. By this time I reckon they had got a slight idea that swingin in a grapevine swing ain't what it use to be. We swung across back and forth two or three times with a smooth and steady swish, and then the old swing broke and we all went down into the creek with a mighty swash.

"Now if you remember, Uncle Rufe, there is a plum nest of grapevines and bamboo briars along the banks of that creek. We didn't get drowned 'cause the water want deep enough for that, but of all the scramblin and screamin and splashin and huggin you ever saw or heard tell of or read about, me and them two town girls had it then and there.

"And when finally at last we come forth and got out on safe ground onest more they want so tremendius much prettier than me, and I had on jest about as many clothes as they did. Dodblame em, I knowed their time was comin somewheres along the line and I was willin to go down with em if it had to come that way.

"What next? Well, them two town girls took their blamed old wheel and went on back home, whilst I left the dear, delightful old grapevine swing floatin down the creek and went on my way rejoicin.

"You can tell all you know about how I rid the wheel. You can tell all you know about me and the girls and the grapevine swing. But I would ruther you don't say nothin about the other boy that had took my pocket knife and clum up in the big beech tree to turn things loose in the due fullness of time. The other boy was my side partner, Brit Walton, and I love Brit like a brother, I do."

CHAPTER IV.

"FRESH FROM GEORGY."

Hit was 15 years ago by the almanac when Lou Watson turned up at our house all of a sudden like about "first dusk sharp," as Blev Scroggins were wont to say. He was right fresh from somewheres back in Georgy. He was the gonebyest most hongriest and lostest lookin boy that ever left his tracks in the regions around Rocky Creek—a stranger in a strange country amongst strange people, and nothin but a yearlin boy at that.

Oncst upon a time I was a boy my own individually self. From what they tell me and from what I can recollect there ain't no earthly doubts about that. Consequentially I love the boys. I love the boys better than any livin thing that cumbers the soil and breathes the native air—exceptin the girls. And when Lou Watson come pikin along the big road that evenin and sidled up to the front gate and said "hello" rather weak and trembly like, the onlyest thing for me to do was to go out there and see who it was and what they wanted.

HE HAD COME TO STAY.

"Is this where a man by the name of Sanders lives?" says the boy as he leant back and braced himself up agin the horse rack.

"This is the place and this is the man," says I. "Where did you come from, where are you headin for, and what was your name when you left home?"

"My name was Lou Watson when I left home," says he. "My name is Lou Watson till yet. I come from Georgy and I ain't goin nowhere in particular right now. I lowed to stop here and go to work and live with you."

"The crops are laid by, fodder ain't ripe and cotton ain't openin any to speak of yet, and raley there ain't a blessed thing around here for a boy about your size to do," says I.

"Don't make a blame bit of difference to me about the crops, mister," says the boy. "Work I want and work I must

have. I would rather not steal, and I'll be essentially dad-burned if I don't die before I will beg. But I can work and do my share of anything that comes to hand on the farm."

"Tain't no use in talkin, mister," the boy went on as he run his thumbs under a pair of home-knit galluses and pulled his breeches up under his arms. "I have come all the way from Georgy, come afoot and come to your house to git work to do and a place to stay. I haven't et a rale good square meal in somethin better than three weeks. There are wrinkles under the brow band of my breeches right now as big as your arm—dast if they ain't. I do essentially believe I could take the slack of my breadbasket and wipe my nose with it—dast if I don't. I must eat and I must wear clothes and I must work. I have come all the way from Georgy. I have come to Rocky Creek. I have come to your house and I have come to stay."

AND LOU REMAINED OVER.

That night I went to bed and went to sleep wonderin what in the thunderations I would do with that stray American boy from Georgy. Accordin to the Scriptures the earth had already been replenished considerable right around there, and so fur as I knew nobody hadn't forgot the multiplication table nor burnt up any cradles to speak of. And if in spite of that the boys had put in to comin across the line from Georgy, and comin to stay, I didn't know for certain where the rush would stop.

But, anyhow, I put the Georgy youngster out in the shed room that night with the rest of the boys. By the first crack of day next mornin he was up and about. When I got out to the lot he had fed the horses and tended to the stock. When I got to the woodpile he had cut up stove wood enough to last two days. When I started to the spring I met him comin up the hill with three buckets of water—one in each hand and the third one on his head. And then when mother went down to the cow pen, bless heavens if he want standin there at the bars with the calf rope in his hands ready waitin for a chance to turn off another job.

Now, it had went through my head the other night that I would ride over to old man Jerry Rutherford's the next mornin

to see if he wouldn't take the Georgy boy to his house and make a place for him. Old man Jerry didn't have no boys of his own so fur as anybody knowed, and I lowed it mought suit him to fill out his hand with the little straggler from Georgy. But before breakfast that mornin, seein what I had saw, says I to myself, says I :

" Little man, your name mought be Watson, or it mought be Smith—it mought be that you come from Georgy, or Reelfoot Lake, or Habbersham or Kallamazoo. But I'll be essentially dadburned if you ain't right in regards to one thing—you have come to stay."

And so for seven long years Lou Watson remained over at our house and tarried around in the Rocky Creek settlement. After that he took and got married and settled down. He helt his own from the jump and is now ahead of the music in regards to this world's goods. And even till yet he can do more work in less time and clamber up around more country grub than any one man that ever came across the border lines of Georgy.

The next time you go down the old federal road across Wolf creek and through the stump hills country—in a big oak grove along the level on yonder side of Butler's mill—you will notice the most loveliest country settlement that you would pass if you rid on for three days. Right there is where Lou Watson and his folks now live.

CHAPTER V.

THERE ARE BOYS AND BOYS.

The neatest and most sweetest thing in this country is a pritty girl dressed in white, with plenty of lace and ribbons for fancy-trimmings. But next to the girls I love the boys. Once upon a time I was a boy myself, with all of a boy's trials and temptations and troubles and tribulations. And whilst I was a boy, which the same it want my fault, I was a boy right, and a boy all over. I reckon no doubts by this time you have seen a few "gal boys," as Aunt Nancy Newton calls them, but I ruther like a real, genuine, natural, healthy boy—one that can travel all the gaits and cover all the ground. It don't look natural and right for a boy to be as good and gentle and sweet as a girl—particular if he is sound and healthy. In my general brushin around the country I have met up with a heap of boys, and various and sundry different sorts of boys.

A MONSTROUS BRIGHT BOY.

Durin the summer of 1890 I was out on a campaign trip through one of the hill counties of North Alabama. I was travellin over a terrible rough and lonesome road one day, and hadn't laid eyes on a livin soul for about two hours, when I met a country boy ridin a little blaze-faced, pacin mule and totin a big tin bucket on his arm. I was broke down and lonesome anyhow, so I pulled up in the shade of a tree, and when the boy rode up I went at him as follows :

"Hello Buster! top of the mornin at you." says I.

"Howdy Mister," says he.

"How does your coperosity seem to egashuate?" says I

"Tolerable fermently accordin to our doxology, how does yours seem to redoshiate?" says he.

"Are you travellin around today or jest goin somewheres?" says I."

"Goin summers," says he.

"What you got in that bucket?" says I.

" Butter," says he.

" What sort of butter is it?" says I.

" Cow's butter," say he.

" Is it fresh?" says I.

" No, sir, mammy salted it this mornin'," says he.

" If you ever git down into the neck of woods where I live please pass in callin'," says I.

" Same to you and all your family," says he.

I had bit off more than I could worry down and backed myself up agin a snag when I want lookin for it, but right down at the bottom of my heart there is a secret admiration and a pleasant recollection of that bright country boy.

A POWERFUL PEART ONE.

The last time I was in Texas I took a few days off and went with a small crowd way up across Red River and out into the hills of Arkansas on a camp hunt. One day whilst out trampin around lookin for somethin to shoot at, all of a suddent like I come in sight of a log cabin on a high hill. It was cold as flugins that day and when I saw a good healthy smoke curlin up out of the rock chimley I was soon headed for the cabin. I knocked on the door, somebody said " come in," and in I went. Then I took notice at oncst that I had blundered into a country school house. The teacher was a tall young man, with hump shoulders and a pale, hatchet face. He stood about six feet and three axe handles in his socks and looked like a man that didn't put any salt in his dirt.

" Walk right in, stranger, and make yourself at home," says the teacher. " I am more than glad to see you. I am particular glad to give the right hand of welcome to a man that comes straight and fresh from Texas," he went on presently, and I could see he was warmin up considerable as he went. " I am glad to see you right now and right here," says he. " They tell me that your people down there have got the notion that Arkansas was left clean out of the grand march of civilization, and that our people are rank, blank strangers to the noble influences of progress and education. Here you can git a glimpse of our splenid school system, and see with your own eyes what we are doin for the great and glorious cause of education.

"Simeon Hunnicut, stand up," says the teacher, turnin around and facin the school, which the same it was made up of twenty-three children—fifteen girls and eight boys, rangin in all the way from seven years old up to nineteen.

A bright lookin little boy, with long red hair and a freckly face and one leg of his breeches rolled up to the knee, responded and stood up.

"Came forth now, Simeon," the teacher went on, "and spell some for the stranger. The good name and honor and glory of your native land—the great state of Arkansas—is now in your hands, Simeon. The day and the hour has come when you must tote the flag of our progress and prosperity and bear it proudly to victory, or drag it in the dust of defeat and humiliation. Bring the book to me, Simeon."

"By hokeys, I'm the red-headed woodpecker you are lookin for," says Simeon after squirtin a stream of tobacco juice half across the puncheon floor, and the book was brought.

It was one of these old-fashion blue back spellers. The teacher took it and turned the leaves till he got about half way through.

"Spell some there, Simeon," says he. Simeon took the book.

"I'll be doubly dadburned if I do," says Simeon. "I spelt right along there last week, and I don't chaw my tobacco but oncst, kurnel," and he handed the book back to the teacher indignantly.

The teacher turned a few more leaves and stopped somewhere in the neighborhood of I-N-C-O-M-P-A-T-A-B-I-L-I-T-Y. "Maybe you can find somethin along there with which your towering genius will condescend to grapple," says the teacher, as he put the book in the boys hand's oncst more.

"Goshermighty kurn my ugly buttons if I hit a lick there," says Simeon, "Didn't I pull that very place day before yistiddy, kurnel? Blamed if I didn't, kurnel, and if you take Simeon Hunnicut for a short horse you are jest simply barkin up the wrong stump. I'll be eternally bung stung if I open the pot there."

"Sposin you take the book and find somethin to suit your-

self," says the teacher, and he threwed the book at Simeon as hard as he could drive.

Simeon caught the book on the fly, as it were. He then spit on his left thumb and turned the leaves slow and cautious for about five minits before he stopped.

"Well, kurnel," says Simeon, "if I don't give old Baker a few raps, dadburn me," and the spellin match went bravely on. When I left the school house I give the teacher my word for it that I would write him and Simeon up some day so as to make it known of all men that the grand march of progress and civilization and development is still goin on in the great state of Arkansas.

A WHOLE LOT THE MATTER.

It was a cold, raw, drizzly, dreary day in the month of January. Way over in one of the western counties of Alabama, not far from the Mississippi line, I was ridin along all alone by myself. The sun didn't shine a single lick all day, but I could tell from the general appearment of things that it was most night. It was wild, rocky country, where you mought ride ten miles on a dead stretch and never see a livin human bein. The big road led over a hill and across a branch, and then over another hill and across another branch all day long. All of a suddent like a bend in the road brought me in sight of a covered wagon and I thought to myself maybe I will now run into a jolly crowd of campers. The wagon stood in a little open clost to the road and the oxen had been unyoked and tied up for the night. But as I rode up the onlyest livin sould I could see was a yearlin boy, which the same he was down on his knees tryin to start a fire and cryin like his heart would break. He didn't have on many clothes, and them that he had was powerful plain and thin. He never looked at me when I rode up, but went on foolin with the fire and shakin and shiverin and cryin. Naturally of course it was none of my business, but the sight of that boy touched a tender place in me and I had to stop and find out somethin if I could in regards to the circumference of his calamity. I couldn't help it.

"What's the matter with you, sonny?" says I soft and gentle as I could, cause I was mighty nigh ready to cry myself.

"Nothin much in particlar," says he.

"But there must be somethin terrible the matter to make you cry and take on so," says I, "and you must tell me what it is. Maybe I can help you out of your troubles and tribulations."

"Taint no use, Mister," says the boy between his sobs—"taint a blame bit of use. But if nothin else will do I can tell you how it is. Old Buck has got the holler horn and got it bad, Daddy is layin out there in the wagin dead drunk, Sister Sal she loped off with a strange man last night, Mammy she took and run away wid a sewin machine peddler this mornin, our dog died last week, and the goldarned wood is wet, and dadblame it I don't want to go to Texas nohow."

I give the boy my pocket knife and two bits in money, told him to brace up and be a man as best he could, and left him alone in his troubles. That was all I could do.

IT WAS MIGHTY BAD.

Late along towards the last days of October I had went over in the hill country turkey huntin, and on my return back home I fell in with a travelin Methodist preacher. The weather was hot as summer time, and by-and-by the preacher lowed he was monstrous thirsty. We rode by the next house we come to and hollered at the gate. A healthy, happy lookin boy, with knit galluses on and his breeches pulled way up under his arms, come prancin around one corner of the house and the preacher ask him if he wouldn't please be so kind as to fetch him a drink of water. The boy darted back around the house and disappeared under the hill. Presently he got back, and when he come out to the gate he brought one of these old-fashioned, crooked-neck, big-bellied gourds full of cool, fresh water. The preacher dreaned the gourd and returned his thanks to the boy, and then started off on a runnin conversation.

"Where is your father today, my little man?" says the preacher.

"He's down there under the hill," says the boy.

"And what is he doin down there under the hill, my little man?" says the preacher.

"Makin corn whisky," says the boy.

"Mercy on us!" says the preacher, "that's too bad. I'm sorry you told me, my little man. That's too bad, too bad, too bad."

"Yessir, you are plum right, mister," says the boy. "It ad, mighty bad. But its about the best the old man can do this fall. We can't use store bought whisky with cotton down to 5 cents a pound and still a tumblin. Poor folks must have poor ways, mister, or mean ones."

"Goodbye, and may the Lord have mercy on the country," says the preacher as we rode off, and from that he lit in and preached a reglar sermont to me on the general cussedness of the human race.

THE BOYS PLAYED MARBLES.

That brings to mind the story they use to tell on Sammy Wickenton as to how he got the best of a preacher. Sammy's folks was all big Methodists, but Sammy want nothin but a plain American boy. One Sunday the old folks went off to spend the day with some of the neighbors. They left Sammy at home and told him he must keep the chickens out of the garden, let the cats alone, and be a good boy.

Durin the day some other little boys dropped in, and torectly Sammy had the whole shootin match out in the back yard playin marbles. Now it so happened that the preacher come that day. He didn't find nobody in the house, so he went on out in the back yard and caught the boys playin marbles.

"Sammy, my boy, I am plum surprised at you," says the preacher. "What would your father and mother say if they knowed you was here at home, on this beautiful, holy Sabbath day, playing marbles, and playin for keeps at that?"

"There aint no tellin what they would say if they knowed it, parson," says Sammy, "but they don't know it, and they aint goin to know it if you don't run and tell 'em."

"It is true they don't know it, cause they ain't here to see it, but the good Lord knows it, Sammy," says the preacher.

"You can hide your meanness from your father and mother, Sammy, but you can't hide it from the Lord. He sees you right now. He is everywhere, and He sees you all the time."

Well, it seems like that was somethin new to Sammy.

"Look ahere. parson," says he, "do you mean to stand up there and tell me that God is everywhere?"

"To be certainly of course I do, Sammy," says the preacher.

"Is God up there in that tree?" says Sammy.

"Yes, He is up there in that tree," says the preacher.

"Is God over there in the jam of the fence?" says Sammy.

"Of course He is over there in the jam of the fence," says the preacher.

"Is God right down there in that ring with my marbles?" says Sammy.

"Certainly He is," says the preacher.

"Well. is God back here in this pocket?" says Sammy, as he put his hand back behind him where a man totes his pistol pocket.

"I have told you, Sammy, that God is everywhere," says the preacher, "and of course He naturally must be back there in that pcket."

"You can shoot on, boys," says Sammy, "the preacher is off of his base this time. I aint got no pocket back there."

But God bless the boys anyhow. They may be bad all over in spots as big as a bed quilt, but ninety-nine in the hundred of them will come around all right on the home stretch and make good husbands and good fathers and good citizens. The world still needs them in its business.

CHAPTER VI.

THE OLD GRAY HORSE.

Talkin about big floods and spring freshits and gettin in close places—that's what makes me say what I do about the little old gray horse. I'm not more than a long day's drive from the poor house, and I can't say right where I'll stand when the storekeeper opens up, but the old gray can git anything I've got that he wants.

There ain't no particlar style about the horse, you notice, and he ain't got no git-up-and-git worth mentionin now. But he's a member of the family, and the family can't always count on me to do the talkin and hustle for the necessaries. He's free white and twenty-one, and I give him all the reins when he wants them. He has been dead on his legs and off of his feet for many years, and he don't have to fling a shoe or make a track only when it suits him. There are other horses on the place that's younger and stronger and better looking than him, and they can run the plows and the wagons and do the drivin and the saddlin for the concern. The old gray has seen his best days long ago, and is now on the pension list—drawin his rations and takin his rest for honorable service. He's jest one of your has-beens.

But he had his day, and in that day he was the best all-round horse in this neck of the woods by a long jump. I bought him of old Squire Wilson when he was nothin but a three-year-old, and a shabby one at that. When he was four I starts him to holdin the stirrups and lookin through the collar tolerable reglar, and then he shed his baby teeth and commenced fillin out and roundin up all around. But he was stunted at the start, and there is nothin like a good start when it comes to handlin horse flesh. He never did get over the bad start in takin on his form. He was always slab-sided and sway-backed and ruther awkward in his general makeup. All the same he had

some of the stuff in him that makes goers and stayers, and it showed up in good time. Big leg bones, and high withers, and short back, and droopin rump, and thin chest and short forelegs and long, strong hams. There was muscles on his arms and legs that looked like jack rabbits under the skin. Iron-bound and copper-bottomed and supple-jointed, he could git over the ground like a bird and hit a straight reglar lick every day.

NO TIME FOR SPOSIN.

But as I was goin on to say, me an the old gray have had some hard rubs and pulled through some mighty close places together, and as long as we both live he will find corn chops in the troft and hay in the rack every time he goes to the stable.

It was early in the summer of '72 or '73, if my count aint wrong, and I was farmin then down in South Alabama, on the Conecuh river bottoms. We had a right smart rain and the river got full to the brim, but she want sloppin over any and travelin was considered plum safe. Our Mary was a little spring pullet then, and we had started her to school to one of the Cross girls over the river a mile and a half, or maybe a little better, from home.

When we got up that morning the sky was clear as a bell, and the sun was shinin and the birds was singin and the bees a hummin. It was a clean 24 hours since any rain had fell on our place, and it looked like nothin but fair weather ahead. Little Mary was most crazy to get back to school, sayin how she was in her a—b abs now, and if she missed another day she'd have to go foot, and the other scholars would laugh and poke fun at her.

"I'm awful skittish about lettin Mary off to school this mornin," says the good old lady to me after breakfast, and then she wants to know my judgment on the situation.

"Let the child go," says I. "She's all wrapped up in her books and it would most break her heart, I reckon, to go foot. She's as smart and handsome as her mother, and as proud and high-headed as her daddy, and she's going to have all the schoolin she'll take."

"But I'm not feelin right easy about the water," she says.

"Sposin the river takes a spurt up and gits out of her banks. And that aint all. It may rain again to-day, for all I know. My corns is hurtin awful, and the weather is so pranky, Rufus."

"It aint my time of year for sposin," says I. "Life is too brief and time is too scarce. Let the little one go."

Then the good lady said it must be so, she reckons, bein as I was the general boss, but still she couldn't help feelin a little bit jubius bout the weather and the river.

THE RIVER RUNNIN MAD.

So I straddles the gray and started off to see Will Tom Pickens, thirteen miles up the river. The horse went off in a swinging fox-trot, and presently he broke into a long gallop. I was goin to see Will Tom about a land trade I had in soak with him, and we was makin bully time over the level sandy road. We had put about nine miles behind us when all of a sudden the gray stops stone still, pricks his ears forward and gives a loud snort.

Somethin's wrong somewhere, says I to myself. The horse wouldn't break his gait up so, with his good trainin, if there want no trouble in the woods.

A strong wind was blowin square in my face, but I urged the nag on to a little clearin fifty yards ahead, and then I looked on a sight that will stay with me to my dyin day. The river was spread out over the woods and fields, belly-deep, it looked like, and comin right down on us like a mill race with the dam busted. I could hear her roarin and snortin and stompin, like a drove of wild steers stampeedin of a canebrake. I knew in a minit that there had been a water-spout or cloud-burst somewhere in the up-country, and the river was runnin mad as a March hare through the swamp lands. My hair stood up and there was a funny sort of hurtin in my throat, like my heart was huntin for the open air. I glances up at the sun, and then this calculation runs through my head before you could say scat with your mouth open.

"It's past 8 o'clock now. My little girl is jest about startin off to school. Will she clear the swamp before the freshet runs down to the big road crossin?"

AN AWFUL RACE.

A second more, and the little gray wheeled in his tracks like a top and swopped ends for home. I let him have all the slack in the reins and dug him deep in the flanks with my spurs and he went off on the back trail like he was shot out of a cannon. It was squally times and I was tolerable badly rattled, but I leans over on the horse's neck and talks to him same as he was folks :

"Untie them legs, young fellow, and use 'em for all they're worth. No jokeyin, no foolin now. It's a long and terrible heat ahead, but the stakes is worth a hundred men and horses like you and me. By golly, we'll win it and beat the river to the crossin if it strains every muscle, snaps every nerve, and breaks every bone in your hide. Git out of the woods andgo!"

As we shot down through the swamp we found the branches and slous and laggoons fillin up with back water, but the gray cleared them at a single leap, one by one, and still my spurs was plowin deep into his bleedin sides at every jump. But he was dead game, and never floundered nor flickered nor flinched. Seems like he kept squattin and gittin closer and closer to the ground as he went plungin and dashin and tearin along like a storm on wheels. In little or no time we shot from the swamp and out on the sand ridge, and I knew six miles of the awful race was run. There the river made a little bend and we gained half a mile by the straight road.

And I'll be dog-goned if I don't believe that horse knew what was up and what we had to do as well as I did, if not some better, for I was mighty nigh crazy. I was hollerin at the horse, and plowin up his flanks with the steel rowels, feelin like I would choke to death, and sweatin great drops of sweat as big as your fist. Away he goes down the ridge with the speed of the wind, his long slab sides as bloody as a beef and smokin like a steam engine.

When we hove in sight of home I sees the good lady out in the garden pickin vegetables for dinner. Takin off her fly bonnet and raisin her hand so, she looked at me and the horse comin down the road, and seems like she was sayin to herself :
"Sakes alive ! Is he drunk or crazy?"

WON BY A SCRATCH.

Reckon that horse wanted to stop at home? Narry time once. He runs by the wood lot gate like a shot and went a splittin on down the slope towards the river. The good lady was a wavin her hands, and gesturin and callin to us as we dashed by, but I couldn't say nothin. My face was set to the river and I goes right on headin for that point.

Well, we found little Mary down in the swamp jest across the bridge. She was tackin along at her own gait, pullin flowers and shooin the butterflies out of the path as she went. I takes her by one arm, lifted her to my saddle bow, then wheeled the horse and made for the upland. When we got out on the brow of the hill past the high water mark I slowed up, and there we met mother comin at full tilt, quarrelin to herself and wantin to know what in the world was the matter. I sets the little one in her arms and slid off the horse to the ground, remarkin that there want anything the matter in particular, exceptin that a spring freshet was coming down the river like a thousand of bricks, and I didn't want to lose our little picaninny that a way.

Then I gits weak and tremblin in my knees and set down by the road to take a fresh breath and rest myself a little. In less time than it takes to tell it the river was sloppin over and sloshin out of her banks, spreadin out belly deep through the woods and fields and sweepin everything before her. And inside of an hour that freshet was rippin and roarin through the tops of the elder bushes and playin with the corn tassels.

Mother she cries, womanlike, when the trouble was all over, and I laughs some, but of course we was both monstrous glad. The little pullet was powerful sorry she didn't git to school that day, but said how she was awful glad her daddy want drunk, or either crazy.

WITH SWEAT AND BLOOD.

But if that horse want a sight to look at then I'll pay for the lyin. He was puffin and blowin same as a forty inch bellows and smokin like a fog horn. He was as wet as if he had swum the river, freshet and all, and blood and sweat was pourin down his sides and flanks and drippin and tricklin from his belly to

the ground. There was blood enough in his flanks to do the paintin for a whole Indian war dance and when he cooled off he was so stiff till it took me two long hours to lead him back home. He's never had much action in his pegs since, and you can see the dark scars there yet, where my spurs plowed through his skin and dug up the hair.

The next year we picked up and moved back to the hills. The swamp lands grow bully crops if the seasons hit right, but the river is too durn tricky and uncertain for an old man to live with. Whereas, I moved my washin and gives her plenty of room to spurt up and slop over whenever she feels like it.

So that's what makes me say what I do about the little old gray. There aint no particlar style about him, and he has lost the old time git up and git ; but I called him once in cold, dead earnest, and he showed down and come like a thorough-bred every inch. He's earned his feed with sweat and blood, and blame my cats if he can't always git the best that's in the barn.

CHAPTER VII.

HOW BLEV. SCROGGINS' "SLATE" WENT THROUGH.

They tell me that the time use to be when people didn't have nothin but straight goods in politics, and a man could git a good fat office without hummin and hustlin for it. Maybe so, maybe so, but I reckon that must of been somewhere way back down the dim and dusty lanes of the past before my day and generation. As far back as I can remember politics have always been politics, and if a man hunkers down and waits for the people to run him down and rope him into office he is more than probable to git barred out as a short horse and left at the post.

Did you ever hear how Blev. Scroggins won in a close finish and got to be high Sheriff of the county? If you never did you ought to know, cause that was in them good old days when they say men toted fair and square with everybody, and American politics was honest as the sunshine.

FIXING UP A SLATE.

When the campaign opened up that year there was only two candidates in the field for Sheriff—Sam Nettles and Andy Lucas. Both of them was good men and daylight Democrats, and game to the bone, and it was pull Dick pull Devil as to which one would git to the tank first. They fought over every inch of the ground and had the fight and the fun all to themselves clean up till the Convention met to put out a ticket.

About ten days before the Convention was to meet, Blev. Scroggins come over to my house one night after supper and give it out that he had a big scheme on hand which he wanted to lay down for my consideration. We could talk it over between ourselves he said and then if I thought the trick would win it was a go. So we went out to the horse lot and had a long private talk.

"Rufe Sanders," says Blev, "I am goin to be the next high Sheriff of this county. I reckon maybe you hadn't thought about that, but it is in the cards jest that way, and if you will go

snooks with me and we play the game close and steady the pot will be ours."

"But you ain't before the people as a candidate, Blev," says I, "and the Convention will meet next week. How can you win when you ain't entered for the race and nobody don't know that you are goin on the track? It looks to me like Sam Nettles and Andy Lucas have got the go and several leaps ahead of you."

"Don't be givin yourself any worriment about them little things, Rufe," says he. "You are plum right about Andy and Sam havin the best of me in the start, but when the race is wide open and free for all, with straight heats, best two out of three, it might come to pass somehow or somehow else that the hindmost horse could sweep the field and swing down under the wire first. I have been plannin and schemin and thinkin over this thing while you and Sam Nettles and Andy Lucas was all sleepin the sleep of the just, and the general opinion around Rocky Creek is that the man that takes his old musket down and starts out to shoot Blev Scroggins for a fool is simply barkin on the wrong trail. I have done been and fixed up a slate to run in on the county Convention, and Rufe, let me tell you, if the hame strings hold and the traces don't break and the breechin don't fly up, I am goin to pull it through like a daisy. If the slate goes through without gettin smashed it will stand about as follows, to-wit :

- " Blev Scroggins, for Sheriff.
- " Andy Lucas, for First Deputy.
- " Sam Nettles, for Second Deputy.
- " Simeon Collins, for County Judge.
- " Bud Newton, for Collector.
- " John Andrew Milligan, for Assessor.
- " Will Tom Pickens, for County Clerk.
- " Rufus Sanders, for County Commissioner. "

WORKING THE TRICK.

I reckon my eyes must of got bigger and bigger as Blev went on with the slate, cause there want a single candidate in the whole lot exceptin Sam Nettles and Andy Lucas, and both of them was down as deputies under the Sheriff. But Blev said

it didn't make a blame bit of difference with him whether they was all candidates or not. He knowed durn well that they would take the offices if it was only fixed up so they could git them.

"This is the way I am goin to work the game," says Blev, "and if you pull with me all the cards in the pack can't beat it. Me and you between us can have things our own way here in Rocky Creek, and we can make the cat jump to suit us. Now, my plan is for us to pull in together and git up a list of delegates that we can handle like so many sticks. It is the busy time of year and with fine weather for farm work some of the delegates that don't take much stock in the great game of politics nohow will want to stay at home. They can stay and keep the farm work goin on if they want to, but their votes will be counted our way all the same. Well, the Rocky Creek delegation will go up solid as a brick wall for Blev Scroggins for anything he wants, and we can throw them about in the Convention, first to one man and then to another, so as to block the game till they all git tired and the cards will run to us like a shot. When the break comes me and you and the other members of the slate will bob up like so many cork stoppers and come out on top. Talk about your full hands and ten strikes, but won't that be bully politics?"

"It is a fine game, Blev," says I, "provided we can manage the cards and make it come out like you say."

"Don't you put in so durn many 'ifs' and 'ands,'" says he, "or you might jar my hand before the game opens. It will work, Rufe, it will work, if we only cut the cards and pull the strings. I know you are for Lucas, but you can jest simply sing that thing low from now until the Convention meets and then you can flop to Scroggins and shake the earth, as it were. In a regular scrub race we couldn't play the game this way but in ordement to beat the Whigs and have honest politics, we are tryin on the Convention plan this year. You must stay right here and bring Rocky Creek around all right. I will give it out that I have left the field in favor of you, and then anything you say will go with the boys. Now, as for me, I am goin to bruise around careless like in the other beats and let it leak out that in case of a deadlock I may come in as a dark horse for the sake

of peace and harmony and the unanimous success of our grand old party."

LIKE SWAPPIN KNIVES.

Well, me and Blev went on the plans and specifications that he had laid down and between us we went up with a solid delegation that we could handle like a crowd of boys swappin pocket knives. Blev had put his hand in the game and shut me out once with old man Jeems Staggers in the race for county coroner. But now the past was past. We had smoked the pipe of peace and furled our little hatchet, blade down, and once more Blev Scroggins had old Rocky Creek in his vest pocket.

As soon as we got to the Convention Andy Lucas come around to the Rocky Creek boys and says to me, says he :

" Well, Rufe, old boy, how do we stand for sheriff? "

" We are solid for Blev Scroggins, " says I.

" But Blev aint in the race, " says he.

" I know that, Andy, " says I, " but we can enter him upon the mellowing of occasion, as it were. "

" Well, who are you for for county judge? " says he.

" We are solid for Scroggins, " says I.

" Who are you for for collector? " says he.

" We stand like one man for Scroggins, " says I.

" Who is your man for assessor? " says he.

" Scroggins, first, last and forevermore, " says I.

" Who will git Rocky Creek for county clerk? " says he.

" The Honorable Blevins Scroggins, " says I, " and he is also on our ticket for county commissioner. "

" Who are you for for Governor of this great state? " says he.

" Blev Scroggins, of Rocky Creek, " says I.

" Well, by all the devils at once, who is goin in as President of these United States? " says he.

" Blev Scroggins, like a deer in a walk, " says I.

And at that time I do believe Andy Lucas was about the maddest man I ever saw, but he didn't lose his head and beg anybody for a fight on the spot.

But durin all this time Blev Scroggins was mixin around

among the various delegates and trading on Rocky Creek to beat bobtail. He made some sort of a deal with every candidate in the field, givin one vote for three, and then traded the delegation straight and solid to all the men on the slate. Old Simeon Collins and Bud Newton and John Andrew Milligan and Will Tom Pickens had all come in with delegations that they could round up any way they wanted to. So when the Convention at last come together the old hen was on, and the general appearance to a man on the ground floor was that she would lay a Scroggins egg before the sun went down.

MAKIN A DEADLOCK.

To start with the Convention put on the two-thirds rule and to the general surprise of everybody old man Collins went through for county judge like he was shot out of a shovel. The other candidate for judge was old Jerry Turney, and a better man never breathed the breath of life. But he had been takin things easy and sleepin on his own rights. He didn't have no opposition and everybody was for him. He didn't come in that day till after the Convention met, thinkin all he had to do was to make a ringin speech and thank the Convention for the unanimous honors they had heaped upon him. And when the cat jumped to Collins old Jerry looked like a man that had answered before he was called. He mounted his nag and rode right off home, and from that time to his dyin day he never played another hand in politics.

But when the Convention got down to the office of sheriff Blev went in for makin a deadlock. He throwed Rocky Creek, single shot first to Andy Lucas and then to Sam Nettles and got it back in seven scatterin votes from the other slate beats. As between Sam and Andy it stood about six with one and a half dozen with the other before the Convention, and by the third ballot Blev had the thing tied into a double and twisted bow knot. Then he set right down and held his little hand steady, knowin full and well that he could depend on it when things got good ripe for a stampede. He had started in with Rocky Creek solid, and old Collins, after he was shot through for county judge took and throwed the delegates from his beat, Bark Log,

in a bunch to the Scroggins column. That was in the bargain, and he knowed that the man that made a deal with Blev Scroggins and then didn't deliver the goods would be takin his life in his own hands with all the odds on the other side. So you see how Blev held a pair that would do to draw to. The knot was tied hard and fast, there want but one man on the floor that could cut it, and his name was Scroggins.

“WAITIN FER THE CAT TO JUMP.”

The game went on in that shape for somethin better than fifty ballots, and there was no change exceptin when Blev waved his hand at the boys and throwed a few votes to Lucas or to Nettles, throwin one up and droppin the other down only to make them mad and restless and nervous. As the time went on various and sundry delegates made a move to adjourn the Convention, but Blev would shake his head at the boys, and there she set.

I got powerful tired and hungry and dry myself, and so I went around and told him to lets adjourn the blame thing long enough for the delegates to git a bite to eat and change their breath anyhow. But Blev said no.

“If you want to jump this game, Rufe Sanders,” says he, “you can do it, and then you will see how nice and quick I can smash off the tail end of that slate. There ain't but one way to win this fight, and that is to keep cool and be easy till we starve and sweat the whole concern down to where we can run it our way. Go on now and brace up and hold Rocky Creek in line till I say the word. I can tell to a minit when to say go. I am n this game to win. I am waitin fer the cat to jump.”

I held myself down as best I could and kept Rocky Creek in line till way long in the shank of the evenin. By this time every man in the Convention was hungry down to his heels and so dry till he was spittin dust. On my word as a natural-born Southern gentleman, and a full-width, all-wool Democrat, that was the durndest, hottest, wearisomest, sickest, driest looking crowd of delegates that ever got together to express the hones wishes of the unterrified Democracy.

But there set Blev Scroggins as calm and cool as a cucumber, smilin all over himself and "waitin fer the cat to jump."

Presently I saw Andy Lucas and Blev holdin a private confabulation together and torectly Sam Nettles also went around to speak a few words with "the gentleman from Rocky Creek." Then Blev smiled and nodded and waved his hand at the boys, and on the next ballot he cut the knot and went in as high sheriff on the first bounce. And then accordin to the arrangements that Blev had made Andy Lucas was put in as first deputy and Sam Nettles as second.

After that the machinery worked smooth and fast and Blev pulled the slate through without a scratch.

That was years and years ago, and maybe it don't look exactly right for me to be tellin tales out of school. But I now give out the facts simply to show the risin generation that so far as I know politics have always been politics.

CHAPTER VIII.

A CHRISTMAS STORY.

Christmas comes but once a year, and takin it as it comes I ruther like it. There is more than likely always somethin around home about that time to make a man feel some older, but a heap better, and give him a comin appetite. But Christmas never comes around that it don't start me off to thinkin about one of the most saddest sights I was ever called in to look at. One time I saw a little, pale, sick girl waitin and watchin and cryin for Santa Claus to come, when at the same time her Santa Claus was off on a drunk.

A POOR WHITE MAN.

Somehow or somehow else I don't much love to git too much mixed up with a poor white man. As for that, we are all more or less poor. But what I mean is one of these poor white men that ain't got nothin and don't want nothin—that goes on plowin and splittin rails for somebody else as long as he lives, moves his washin from one settlement reglar and frequent, and never knows where the rations are comin from till they come.

It is somethin like drivin a six-mule team backwards uphill for a man to keep up with the expenses and meet his honest debts, and then git rich runnin a farm. But mother earth is big enough to take good care of us all if we will only treat her kind and gentle and tickle her bosom right plentiful, and I am bound to have my own personal opinions of a man that has been livin in this country fifty or seventy-five years without stakin off a claim, and still ain't got a little nest somewhere that he can call his own.

Old man Lige Runnels was what I would call a genuine poor white man. He filled the measure till it slopped over without half tryin. He was the all-fireddest lowdownest, trifflinest old sinner that ever left his trail in our settlement. He lived and made out like he was farmin one year on my place, but the hotter the sun comes down and the faster the grass grows the

lazier old Lige would git, and when he want loaferin around home playin off sick he was over at the Cross Roads drunk. Whereas of course the grass runs away with the crop, and it didn't much more than turn out enough to pay the rent.

OLD LIGE HAD A PULLET.

I reckon me and old Lige never would of mixed any at all exceptin that I didn't back my judgment on his general appearance. From the first time he shows up in the settlement I set him down as mighty small potatoes and blame few in the hill. But when he come over to see me one day about farmin on my lower field he brought a little girl with him about so years old, which the same he said was by his present wife. At that time the doctor hadn't come around and left our little Mary at the house, and I thought old Lige had way yonder the prettiest little chick I ever laid my old eyes on. She had come along bare-headed and bare-footed, but, by gum, she was as pretty as red shoes, with yellow-buff stockins and blue garters. There was gold in her hair, and roses in her cheeks, and violets in her eyes, and lilies on her brow.

Takin a running look at the situation, it seems to me like the good Lord never would of give a daughter like that to a man that didn't have some good pints about him, and on them general grounds I told him he could move in the cabin down there by the big road and run the lower field the comin year. His little girl's name was Josephine-Elizabeth-Ann, but they called her Jo for short.

It turned out afterwards that her ma was a good, smart woman and a heap the best man of the family, and sometimes I think maybe that the pritty little pullet was sent to her to kinder even for the way in which she got bugged when she took old Lige in out of the weather.

Me and little Jo sorter took up together somehow from the start, and before the year was out she was at home in our house mighty nigh as much so as she was down to the cabin. She was as bright and sweet-minded as she was pritty, but slender and tender and weakly as any little flower. I used to make her doll

houses and bird cages and flower boxes and sich like, cause old Lige didn't know how and was too golnation lazy to learn.


LITTLE JO FALLS SICK.

That fall when the crops was all out and the weather got cool old Lige pitched out and went to splittin rails for a livin, and it naturally follows that the money went mostly for whisky and the livin comes up missin at the cabin. Nothin but the hand of providence and a good, stirrin wife kept the concern headed away from the poor house.

About two weeks, or maybe a mite better, before Christmas little Jo fell sick with one of these sneakin, creepin low fevers, and as the time passed on it presently begins to look like the prittiest and sweetest flower in the settlement would soon be bloomin in the sky. Her ma couldn't do nothin for waitin on her and watchin and cryin, and old Lige he was comin up drunk reglar every night, so the neighbors around throwed in to keep up the provisions and the women folks took it turn about with nursin little Jo. Everybody loved the little thing, and she couldn't help havin a old daddy that want worth his room where he was goin in the future hereafter.

It was on a Christmas eve, and mother had been down to the Runnels cabin all day nursin the sick and comfortin the well the best she could. When she comes home late that evenin and I ask her about little Jo, she said the poor child was in a terrible bad way. The fever was risin fast, and she was first in her right mind and then plum out of her head.

"If old Lige Runnels don't come home to-night and bring that sick girl some store-bought fruits and a china doll like he promised old Santa Claus would do," mother goes on, "she won't live till another sunset, and he ought to be took out and smeared all over with tar and feathers and swunged off, and then hung for stinkin. Sleepin or wakin, in her right mind or out of it, she is talking with every breath about that doll and nice things old Santa Claus is going to bring her to-night. That triflin old daddy of hers put them notions in her head, and like as not he is over at the cross roads and blind drunk this very minnit. She has been and got her heart set on the china doll



and some store-bought fruits and nothing else will do. She will have to learn more about the empty Santa Claus racket some of these days, but it ain't no time now to be lettin the cat out of the wallet. She made me hang up the biggest stockin I could find on the place this evening, and if the china doll and things ain't in it by daylight, I believe in my soul her little heart will break and kill her."

SOMETHING HAD TO HAPPEN.

I went with mother back down to the cabin after supper, and I want very long finding out that something had to happen.

I had went down in the cellar before I started and filled my pockets full of scalybarks and peanuts and some swivelled up apples of my own raisin. I told little Joe that I had been thinkin about her, and if the creeks got up so old Santa Claus couldn't meet all of his engagements that night, I had some goodies that she could take and put away and eat when she got a bit stronger. She thanks me over and over two or three times, but I could see that it would take somethin else to make Christmas seem like Christmas to her. I told her that we had been killin hogs up to our house and would soon be havin spareribs and sausage meat and backbone stew and so forth, and mother had a stack of cakes and pies and a big hank of molasses candy in the cubbard savin up agin she got well enough to come up and help herself. But she didn't look much tickled over that, and the next thing I knowed she was rattling about the china doll and store-bought fruits and old Santa Claus.

CHRISTMAS MORNING.

"Daddy says everybody gits drunk for Christmas," she put in presently, "but Santa Claus is such a good old man I don't reckon he will git drunk and not think about me."

"I am thunderin glad you don't know it, little one," thinks I to myself, "but I'll be goldarned if you aint hittin the nail square on the head and drivin it slap up now. I would bet the best mule on my place that the old bloat that ought to be here playin Santa Claus for you is over at the Cross Roads right now, and so bilin drunk till he wouldn't know a china doll from a stack of black cats."

It was then past 10 o'clock. Old Lige hadn't turned up yet, and the night was powerful rough and raw out of doors. It had been rainin and sleetin off and on, and mostly on, for a week past, and the roads was awful cut up and bad. But me and mother had both come to the notion that something had to happen, and so I struck out to see Sam Nettles a mile and a half up the road from where we lived.

It was good fifteen miles to the closest town where you could buy china dolls and store-bought fruits, and I lowed if there was a man livin that would take a ride like that agin such wind and weather, his name was Sam Nettles. I give Sam all the news about little Jo, and told him that somebody had to make the trip and bring them Christmas things for her before the break of day.

"It will be a devilish rough road and a long, hard ride," says I, "and the mud is bad enough some places to bog up a buzzard's shadow, but if it comes to a pinch and the last chance I will take the mount myself. But in my old days I am gettin big and clumsy and beefin out so till it would take a mighty strong horse to land me there and back. You are a light weight, Sam, and can set a horse like you was growed to him."

THE WAY IT HAPPENED.

"I will go," says Sam, "and I don't mind the weather so much if we can only keep the little pullet from frettin and flut-terin her life out. If the road was three times longer and rougher than it is I would ride the heat for stakes like that. When will I be ready? Soon as I can throw a saddle on the sorrel horse. How long will it take me to make the run? You know my horse and your answer is his legs.

"Let me tell you somethin else, Rufe," Sam says while I was holdin a light so he could buckle the saddle on, "if the little one down there to the cabin gits better by to-morrow and old Lige Runnels shows up anywhere in this settlement, I am goin to give him the damdest beatin that a white man ever toted out of these woods. Not that I am worrying so much in particular about the ride that is ahead of me to-night, mind you, but any man that would go off on a Christmas drunk and leave a tender

little sprout like that at home sick a bed with the fever and waverin in the shadows of death, can't live in the same neighborhood with me and hold his head up and look honest folks in the face."

"Whatever happens, don't come back without the china doll," says I, as Sam swings himself into the saddle, "and you can fetch a raft of somethin or other nice that a sick girl can eat."

A secont more and the sorrel horse was plugin away through the darkest and roughest night I ever saw.

The first gray streaks of mornin was breakin out of the east when Sam comes back, wetter than seventeen rivers and spattered with mud from the top of his hat to the bottom of his boots. But he brought a big china doll and some store-bought fruits for little Jo, with a pair of gaiter shoes throwed in for good measure.

HE CRAWLED OVER OLD LIGE.

When the weaklin woke up about good daylight from one of them little catnaps, old Santa Claus had been there and gone, and the stockin was chock full and runnin over with the nice things he had left for her. She took the doll to bed with her, and for the first time in two or three days she stopped talkin and turned over and slept long and sweet and sound.

SAM'S FAMILY SETTLEMENT.

Now Sam Nettles was a man with only a few words, but a craw full of sand. He was a little dried up, drawed up, stewed down, scrawny lookin cuss, but when he got his fightin clothes on, my, my, how he would swell up and spread out and grow!

We rode over to the Cross Roads that evenin and Sam kept his appointment with old Lige. His money had run out and the whisky was dyin away in him and the old scalawag was soberin up some cause he couldn't help it. Soon as he saw us ride up he come around and wanted to know if we had heard anything from his little pullet. I gives him the cold facts in the case and Sam shucks his coat.

"Lige Runnels," says he, "your time has come, and if you ain't dead game and powerful quick you have got to take a

lickin from the littlest and shabbiest lookin man in the settlement. I am sore all over in spots as big as a bed quilt, my sorrel horse is as stiff as a fire poker, and my new saddle is everlastingly ruint. But I am not kickin about that. I am only learnin you somethin about tendin to your own family duty, and I don't want you to go and forget the lesson. Are you ready?"

Well, of course old Lige want ready. He was always slow motioned, and it took a tolerable peart man to git ready for Sam Nettles. Before the crowd could come up to see the fun he had crawled all over old Lige two or three times and went through him like a dost of salts. It was the neatest and quickest job I ever saw turned off, and old Lige was as sober as a judge for six months to come.

What about little Jo? Well, from that Christmas day she went on mendin slow but steady, and when old Lige moved away the next spring she was plum well and lively as a cricket in the ash bank. Some five or seven years ago she took and married a shifty young man from down in the flat woods, and there was big stockins and little stockins at their house this Christmas. The other day she sent up a big red bandana handkerchief, some wool gloves with fancy trimmings at the wrist and six pair of home-knit socks to show that old Santa Claus didn't git drunk and not think of me.

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GEO. S. MORRISON, ORIGINAL OF "RUFUS SANDERS."

CHAPTER IX.

"ROUNDIN' UP AT THE OLD LICK LOG."

There generally comes a time somewhere down the line when the wish to spit yellow and say cuss-words and play big man sings itself through every boy's head. Boyhood is the springtime of life, when the sap is runnin up and everything is growin and its plum natural for the youngster to git too big for his breeches.

Did you ever run away from home, when you was a boy? If you never did, take my advice and never do. It don't pay, and there ain't much fun in it for the boy.

But I have. Yes, I was a real, live runaway boy once, and old as I am, it makes me tired and hungry yet every time I git to thinkin about it.

Reckon I was about like other boys raised up in the country. A right likely lad, but like Hardy's buzzard—a little too blame smart. Hardy went to town once and got drunk. Goin along home that evenin he fell off of his horse and went to sleep in a fence jam by the roadside. All of a sudden like he heard a monstrous flutterin and floppin, and when he woke up there sets a turkey buzzard on the fence, lookin like he had jest washed his face and combed his head for supper.

"You're a hustler from taw, Mr. Buzzard," says Hardy, "and I ruther like you for that; but you're jest a leetle too dam smart this evenin."

HOW IT HAPPENED.

I reckon it won't hurt nothin to tell you how I got to be a runaway boy. You ought to stand it if I can, and I can tell it like it happened if it don't split the paper wide open and break the press down.

You see my father (God bless his name and memory) was one of these old school Baptists—"Hardshells," as some people that don't know no better, calls them. Now my notion is that everybody has their faults. Some dance, and some cuss,

and some play cards, and some go to circusses and bet on horse races, and some will have a toddy on cool mornins if it breaks a trace or two and costs the United States another war. The old school Baptists are mostly sober people and as honest as the sunshine itself. But they don't run very deep on teetotalism. They git along tolerable well with old brother Temperance, but they don't gee worth a hardly with old sister Totalabstinence. Comin right down to rock bottom, they likes a nightcap or eye-opener every now and occasionally, and they don't sneak off nor hide out to do their drinkin. In them good old days when I was a boy every man kept a decanter in the pantry or settin on the sideboard, and when their friends and neighbors dropped in the decanter was one in their midst.

We was livin up in Chambers county then, and one Saturday they had meetin at the neighborhood church, and a visitin minister and two deacons comes home with father to dinner. While they was waitin for dinner the decanter was trotted out and they fixed up long toddies for four. Men in them days knowed how to drink. They didn't drink when I was a boy like they drinks now. They didn't gobble it up and throw it down like they was afraid of gettin caught and never expected to get another lick at it. They stirred it slow, and played with it, and counted the beads on it, and talked with it, and took their time and enjoyed it.

As for me, I didnt drink any worth countin them days, but I was big enough to know what it was without smellin it. While father and the preacher and the deacons was lickerin up for dinner, I was layin around on the sofy, with my mouth waterin like a little bull calf roped off from his mammy for the first time.

"Now I has my own notions about the things of this vain and fleetin world," said one of the deacons, after lookin at the bottom of his tumbler. "I believes that whisky is a mighty good thing, brethren, in its place."

I couldn't stand it no longer. "Yes," says I, standin up and layin my hands tenderly on the bellyband of my breeches, "and by gum here's the place for it!"

Next thing I knowed I didn't know nothin in particlar worth

smart as you, but they're some older, and they'll never turn you out to graze with the dry cattle if you behaves yourself right and proper. Bye-and-bye, when you grows a little older and bigger, you can pitch out if you want to and git rich and run for guvner and if I'm livin I'll vote for you. But keep yourself solid with the old folks at home, so they'll always have a soft place waitin for you when you plays your hand out everywhere else. Then you can round up at the old lick log any time you feels like it, and always find the back door open and plenty of cold rations in the cupboard."

These words of wisdom as they fell from the lips of the good old man went straight home and plugged the bull's-eye. I never could disremember that runnin lecture as I caught it along the hot and dusty road.

THE ROUNDUP.

Well, the old man drops me down about a mile from home. It was then first dusk, and after takin a considerable swing around through the woods and fields I comes up home through the back way like I went out. I tilted my hat back and put on a bold front and comes up whistlin "Run Nigger Run," and "Yankee Doodle," and "Soap Suds Over the Fence," and other familiar old hymns.

The big old brown house was wrapped up in moonlight and silence, but it was a beautiful sight to me. I was so glad to git home that I hugged the old chaneyberry tree that stood out in the back yard—blamed if I didn't. When I got to the house I found that I was jest in time to be too late for supper. But the cupboard want locked up, and there was a big bowl of clabber and a hunk of sweetie bread settin on the bottom shelf. The best and sweetest old mother in the world had put it out there for me. I reckon she lowed I would come up when I got good and hungry.

After takin the wrinkles out of my stomach I feels lots better, and then I mustered up courage enough to go in the big room. There was mother in the corner knittin on a pair of socks about my size, and father was settin in the other corner readin Scripture to himself. But they didn't say come in, nor where

you been, nor is you well, nor nothin. Not a drum was heard, not a funeral note.

I felt like something had to be said, so I tumbles down on the sofy, remarkin in a bold off-hand voice that a boy couldn't have no luck a fishin with nothin but grub-worms and grasshoppers for bait. Mother she smiles, a weary little smile at that, and father goes right on readin the Good Book. But they didn't say nothin.

Presently I went out and washed my feet in the chicken troft, and then slipped off to bed. My eyes was full of sand and I was achin from the soles of my wayward feet to the top of my tangled head, but before turnin in I prayed this little prayer :

" Now, I lays me down to sleep. I'm goin to be a good boy and live right if it kills me. Good Lord, only forgive me for runnin away and walkin my fool legs off this time, and I'll never git a henscratch from home agin, so help me."

And I never have.

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mentionin. I found myself gettin up on the other side of the room and the old gentleman had the floor. He had floored his first and only begottenson with a double-back-action left-hander, and my head was ringin like a thousand evenin bells.

THE RUNAWAY.

I went down to the woods paster that evenin and thought the situation over, cried some and prayed a little in spots, and made up my mind to move my washin. I was down cast and low-spirited and crest fallen. Seems to me like the old home want what it ought to be nohow, and everybody on the place was dead square agin me, a poor, harmless, helpless boy.

So after thinkin and cryin and wrestlin with my griefs and tribulations, I settled the question in favor of a runaway. That night before I went to bed I wrote out a few touchin mottoes in a big, bold fist on blue pasteboard cards and scattered them around the room, thinkin that when the old folks got up and found the cage empty and the bird gone they would feel sorry and wish they had treated me better. The mottoes run somethin like this:

PUT HIS LITTLE SHOES AWAY.

WILL THEY MISS ME AT HOME?

GIVE THE BOYS A SHOWIN.

WHERE IS OUR WANDERIN BOY TONIGHT?

THE LETTER THAT WE LOOKED FOR NEVER CAME.

THE OLD HOME AINT WHAT IT USED TO BE.

THERE IS NO REST FOR THE WICKED.

KEEP A LITTLE KISS FOR ME.

OUT IN THE COLD WORLD ALONE.

GIVE ME LIBERTY OR GIVE ME DEATH—LIBERTY IN
PARTICULAR.

THE DASH FOR LIBERTY.

Next mornin bright and early I slid out of the window, climbed over the back fence and made a bold dash for liberty. I struck up a swingin trot and kept it till I reached the foot of the lane and then took a nigh cut through the woods for the big road. I was headin for the city, twenty miles away, and as I humped and hustled along the sandy road I was talkin to my fool self, and sayin:

"Rufus Sanders there's a big future ahead of you. They're all agin you at home. Your brilliant spirit and gigantic intellect are not appreciated by your own folks. They simply ain't in it, and you are. You must take your foot and hand and tote your own skillet and make a name and fame and money for yourself. You've got the stuff in you to make a man among men. When you grows great and gits rich they'll be sorry they didn't give you a boy's chance at home. And they'll miss you powerful around the place, too. Who's goin to git up the cows, and feed the stock, and tote in the wood, and sweep the yard, and rope off the calves, and mind the baby now?"

So I pulled along with a bright and rosy future lookin me in the face, and thinkin and plannin how I would make a strike when I got to the city. I lows to myself that a stout heart and willin hands would put me through, stumps or no stumps. But it seems like I spilt my molasses right along there. I tramped and trudged for all I was worth, but presently the sun got higher and hotter and hotter, and I was sweatin and blowin and pantin

all the lands I paid for by the sweat of my face and the wear and tear of my body, and with all the children I have raised up and started out in life, there ain't much room for old Luke Bogan now. A little more pullin and haulin and crowdin will settle the business for good and all, maybe. But I am gettin golnation tired of waitin, Rufus."

THE LAST HAUL.

Some two or three weeks after that they loaded a one-horse wagon with old man Luke and took him and hauled him from his son Phil's house to the home of one of his daughters that was livin way down in the Flat Woods. It was then in the dead heat of summer time and the long, hot haul turned out to be about one too many for the old man. The little tough and wiry body that had stood up under the suns and storms and cares of many years, at last went down under the heat of one summer day.

When the wagon got to the Flat Woods that night old man Luke was out of his head, and talkin and carryin on with himself low and easy and pitiful like. Them that heard him couldn't make heads or tails out of what he said, but I reckon he must have been talkin about "them older and brighter and better days what you read of."

There was a funeral over at the old Bogan place on Tucker's Mill Creek on Tuesday followin. All of the Bogan family and the neighbors for miles and miles around were there. There was mourners a plenty and flowers to spare, and down under the sod and the daisies they found room enough for the last remains of old man Luke Bogan. They didn't write anything on the head-board of his grave, but every time I look back and think about it I feel like writin down the plain and sad and unwashed truth :

"Here Lies a Man That Was Crowded to Death."

LESSONS TO TAKE HOME.

Some people went on to say that it was partly the old man's fault that he couldn't git along with his folks and stay at one place steady and constant, he was so fretful and techy and pevish and hard to please. It is plum natural for old folks, when they live so long till they come back to their second childhood, to git

restless and crosswise and tender hearted, but it ain't their fault. I would ruther find fault with a little sick child than a weak and trembly and helpless old man. People that are young and strong and healthy and in their prime ought to be patient and kind and gentle like as they can with the old folks that are only lingerin yet a little while on the border land.

A soft sheepskin in the old arm chair is a blame sight better than a bushel of flowers on a coffin lid.

There ain't but one thing in this world as helpless and tender as childhood, and that is old age.

Tears on the grave won't wash out the records of the past.

Gentle hands and soft words for the livin will pay better than a long face and a big crowd at the funeral.

The most lonesomest man in the world is the old man that's lonesome.

It takes a brave man to live past his time, and a good one to "wait for the cat to die."

"Life for the livin, and death for the dead."

CHAPTER XI.

THE COURTIN, MATIN SEASON.

“We can still be young and happy in our hearts and thoughts and feelins; we can sing old songs together; we can play sweethearts forever.”

To the old man in particular there is somethin sweet and tender, kinder softnin like and soothin, ruther mellow, mild and dreamy in this courtin, matin season, with its speckled shades and sunshine, shiftin winds and flutterin flowers, when the nights are gettin shorter and the days are growin longer—likewise also somewhat hotter—and the woods are full of music, the air is filled with perfume from the clover blooms and daisies smellin sweeter than a passle of young ladies goin to meetin—in the spring time, gentle Annie.

A REVISION OF THE WEATHER.

There is plenty to be proud of in this good old land we live in—lots of fun and rounds of pleasure, daily bread and homely blessins flowin free for everybody, so that sinful men and women can sing praises and thanksgivin in all weather and all seasons. But for me, somehow or other, if I had to do the pickin, and was runnin of the bureau like it suited me to run it, I would dish out pleasant weather, cool enough to keep the flies off, cool enough to kill muskeeters, cool enough to sleep when night comes without sweatin all your clothes off, without dreamin ugly cuss words; but not cold enough to stop you, catch your breath and take and weave it into icicles and hailstones and then twist them in your whiskers; and not hot enough for meltin off the tail of a brass monkey, or to warp your ribs the wrong way if you stand still in the sunshine.

I would ruther strike a level if I had my way about it, so as not to kill the fruit crop, so as not to parch and wither every yerb and livin green thing jest when human hopes and prospects fill the future full of promise, when the cotton fields are bloomin white this morning, red this evenin, when the corn is lookin

bully, wavin in full silk and tassel, growin so tall you can hear it, hear the rustlin and the poppin if you listen after sunset.

I am always more than willin to take off my winter woolens and come out in lighter riggin, change my overcoat and leggins for a fan and linen duster, and it suits me somethin better, since I come down from a trading stock of shifty, thrifty people, to trade winter games for fishin and swap snow banks off for roses.

So, if I could have my say so, I would like to live my time out, loaf and loll around forever, twixt the spring and early summer, while the woods are full of music and the air is sweet with perfume, while the birds are always singin and the weather always pleasant, and the flowers keep on bloomin ; while the clover is in blossom and the corn in silk and tassle, and you find that dreamy somethin creepin through your thoughts and feelins, ruther gentle like and tender, sorter softenin, very soothin to the old man in particular.

LOTS OF FUN.

In the large and lovely springtime, when it's most too warm and sultry for we old men to be runnin very deep on general farmwork ; when the sun goes high and higher till it gits straight up above you and your shadow swinks and dwindles, growin low and short and squatty, till it looks more like a baby than a man that's grown and settled ; when you see old lazy Lazarus tremblin like a ghost or spirit, risin from the ground before you, and the sweetest sort of music is the dinner-horn that tells you it is time to stop and take out, feed the stock and rest a little ; when the dogwood and honey-suckles bloom in greatest plenty ; when the sap's up in the forest and the bark slips on the hickory and you ruther make some whistles for the children or do nothin ; when it suits a blame sight better not to work and not to worry, jest to skim around the edges, here a lick and there a promise—to be livin but not doin—that is, nothin much to speak of ; when the grub-worms and cockroaches, and the crickets and young wasp nests, loggerheads and other fish bait can be found without much huntin ; when the sky-lark and the thrasher call a meetin in the meader and the birds hold singin matches, and the bull frog in the mill pond sounds the bass and hollers “ kneedeep ; ”

CHAPTER X.

THE SADDEST CASE IN ROCKY CREEK.

A gray head is a crown of glory, and also a mighty good sign for any man to hang out in this valley of ups and downs. Next to a big family of children, old age is about the best and most safest sign of a good man. For a common thing the good Lord don't send little folks to bless a man's heart and home exceptin only when the man is worthy and well qualified to buy the dry goods and pay off the feed bills. And on the same general principles it aint much likely that a man will live a long time and come up to a good old age if there ain't some strong pints in his character to stand by and build on. That is a rule of everyday life. Sometimes it happens to git broke, but in the long run you can bet your bottom dollar on it and land your money safe ninety-nine times in a hundred.

A SELFISH VIEW.

As for me I can't exactly say right where I would like to draw the line on old age if I could have my way about it. You will notice from my style and shape and general outward appearance that I am no spring chicken this fall by a blame sight. And neither is there any colt's teeth in my mouth so far as I know.

But yet I ain't to say old. In some things I am old, while in other things I am young. I am old if you count the sights I have seen and the close places I have pulled through, or measure the long and dusty road that my wayward feet have trod. But so far as my feelings go I am young. My head is clear, my heart is light, my eyes are good, and my body is sound and tough as seasoned hickory. I can eat and sleep and think and work, and but for my looks and the records of the past I could pass myself off anywhere for a four-year-old, shod all around and with packs in every foot.

Sometimes I am fearfully afraid that the time might come when I will git old like some men I have known, and live to be

where us boys made flyin jennies, grapevine swings, seasaws and sich like, when we boys and girls went rovin after sweetshrubs, after heart leaves, in them plain old days when people want so golnation particular as to keep the schools runnin, one for males and one for females, so the boys and girls can't mingle and git all mixed up together, so the girls can't see their sweethearts, and the boys can't steal no kisses.

I can see the white sun-bonnet, with pink linin and blue trimmins, and the dress she wore on May day, with the laces and the ribbons looped and tucked and tied in bowknots, and I recollect exactly how she looked when first I told her that I loved her ten times harder than a mule could kick with both feet, how she blushed and sighed and fluttered while I waited for the answer, and she looked up shy and trustin like and says how she would have me, if in case her folks was willin. I can see the roses bloomin in her cheeks, and count the dimples in her ams and chin and shoulders, hear the music in her laughter, catch the sunshine and the shadows in her smiles and tears and glances like I use to in the old times when we went to school together.

Well, of course I feel some older when I see that old log schoolhouse, and it's ruther lonesome business to be nosin round promiscus in the past that's dead and buried, cause the boys and girls we run with have come up as men and women. Some have gone away to stay, and others linger yet among us, some have mated off like we did, settled down and gone to rasin pigs and chickens, likewise babies.

Yet we hadn't ought to grumble. Life is vain and short, and fleetin, and the only thing that's left us is to live while we are livin. We can still be young and happy in our hearts and thoughts and feelins; we can sing old songs together; we can play sweethearts forever. And for me, I find a lazy, harmless, helpless sort of pleasure in this courtin, matin season, when my heart gits light and frisky and as mellow as a maypop, and I dream them old dreams over.

THE GORGEOUS GIFTED LIAR.

When the busy bees are hummin round and hustlin for the honey, when the lizzard changes colors, green and brown and

tan and yellow, and the rusty, crusty blue John bows and scrapes and tells you howdy ; when the garden truck is tender and the pot is on and bilin, and your mouth begins to water as you smell the good things cookin ; in the long and lazy noontime, in these days of peace and plenty, twixt the spring and early summer ; when the cows git fat and gentle, and the butter looks more richer, and the milk seems like its sweeter, and you find fresh fruit and berries for your pies and rolls and dumplins every day as well as Sundays, till you wonder if you ever can quit eatin and git hungry.

Then your humble fellow-servant, he that calls himself a farmer and a democrat from wayback, without sideshows, without flywheels, without any extry fixments, ironbound and copper-bottomed ; he the statesman with one gallus, with one platform and one ticket ; he the sage that writes from down on Rocky Creek as his headquarters, he the great old story-teller and the weak and wayward sinner ; he the marvelous campaigner and the natural born stump speaker, he the famous cross-roads fighter and the wonderful horsetrader, he the horny-handed scholar, he the gorgeous, gifted liar cuts his yarns and cooks his stories that you read of in the papers, brags on mother and the baby, smokes his pipe and chews tobacco, spits wherever he durn pleases, makes a livin and is happy as a dead pig in the sunshine.

CHAPTER XII.

THE FARMER AND THE BRONCHO.

In the large and lovely autumn, in the mellow, mild October, in the red-and-tan November, in the golden Indian summer, in the joyous harvest season, in the days of melancholy, in the time of peace and plenty.

When the days are growing shorter, and the nights are growing longer, also pleasanter and cooler, as the chill autumnal breezes blow the hayseed through your whiskers without injuring the hayseed, without dislocating whiskers ; when the dew is on the pumpkins and the peavines in the evening, and the frost is on the peavines and the pumpkins in the morning ; when the boys go 'possum hunting every night excepting Sunday, and the boys and girls go roving after chinquepins and chestnuts, after hackberries and suchlike ; and the woods are decked and painted like a girl that's goin to meeting, and the fields are still and withered like a Sunday shirt in August ; when the wood-rat and the squirrel eat the beech mast and the pine cones, storing hickory nuts and acorns to keep fat on in the winter ; when the farmer sells his cotton, and by making every edge cut, pays his debts and pays the doctor, calls it even with the preacher, and has money in his pocket.

* * * * *

From the prairies of the great West, from the bald and bare-foot prairies, from the green and waving pampas, from the land of the buck rabbit, from the bottoms of the Brazos, from the growing State of Texas, comes the fresh and festive trader, the ubiquitous horse driver, with his Pawnee William hat on and his breeches in his bootlegs ; with a drove of Texas horses, with a herd of mustang ponies, with a bunch of bucking bronchos. He's a clever sort of fellow ; he can tell a funny story or a wild and thrilling romance about Indians and cowboys, drink by note and ride like Gilpin, sing a song or dance the cancan, kiss the babies, smile at ladies, while he swaps your very socks off.

He is not a regular trader for the money in the business, but for travel and for pastime, and for pleasure, pure and simple. Since he somehow likes the farmer, he can set him on a bargain, he can sell the blaze-faced pony "cheap ernoough ter make yer head swim, cheap ernoough to make you wonder which you bought him or you stole him. He will go in all the gates some, in the fox-trot or the canter, in the flat walk or long gallop, single foot or sideline pacer, rock you just as soft and easy, till you sleep sound in the saddle, like er baby in er cradle."

Well, the farmer buys the pony.

"BRING FORTH THE HORSE."

There's a picture for the artist and the lover of hard horse-flesh in the farmer's Texas pony. With a wild eye like the eagle, and a nose like the anteater, with a Roman, razor hump-back, and a rump just like the gable end of a Queen Anne cottage. He is wicked, wild and wooly, quick and devilish and uncertain as the wind that helps the witches twist his mane and make their stirrups, and unused to the conditions and ungalled by the fetters of our modern civilization. He can jump and buck and scamper, feed on pine straw and dry oak leaves or the dead grass in the meadow; but to wear the common harness, always peeping through a collar, while his hair is rubbed and ruffled and his high strung nerves are shattered by the heavy, rattling trace chains, feeding on plain corn and fodder, is about three times too many for the bold-faced, bucking broncho. In his blood is crossed and mingled all the fire and all the devil of the ancient Aztec charger, all the tricks and all the meanness of the hardy Spanish stage-horse, all the sly, uncertain habits of the long-haired Indian pony that for centuries served the red man, as a war steed and a pack horse, in the wars against pale faces and in long rides after bison on the plains and over mountains.

"I will crush that haughty spirit, I will bring him to his knittin, I will make him meek and docile, and as gentle as a kitten, so that any child can drive him," said the farmer to himself as he came forth to rope the broncho, came forth conquering and to conquer. "He shall pull my new red wagon,

pull my bran-new Studebaker, hauling wood and rails and sich like through the long and dreary winter ; and when spring comes I can hook him to the plow and turn the soil up, make the fallow lands as mellow as a sand bed in the summer, pitch my crops and cultivate them. Iron bound and copper bottomed, he will do the work a mule would, do it quicker, neater, better, eat less corn and oats and fodder and look better in the harness."

There the farmer dropped his candy.

" RICHARD'S HIMSELF AGAIN."

In the springtime, gentle Annie, when the rooster sheds his feathers, gets as proud as any peacock and goes courtin of the pullets ; when the boys and girls are rovin after heart leaves, after sweetshrubs ; and the sap's up in the forest, and the bark slips from the hickory, and you'd rather make some whistles for the children, or go fishing ; when the birds hold singing matches, and the bees are out for honey and the sunshine makes you lazy, and you'd rather loll and loiter than to fool with corn and cotton ; when the violets and the daisies lift their little bannered bosoms to the sunshine in the daytime, to the starlight in the nighttime.

In the green and grassy meadow stands the wild and wicked broncho, stands the farmer's bald-faced " bargain," belly-deep in the sweet clover. He has shed his winter wrappings, shed his wooly coat of long hair and stands there with his head and tail up, round and sleek as any button. But the farmer's Studebaker idly stands under the shelter, with the shafts both bent and broken and the singletrees gone missing ; and the plow rusts in the furrow and the fields with grass are waving, and a scene of desolation, poverty and ruination greets the vision of the stranger passing by that simple farmhouse, where was life and thrift and plenty when the drover came from Texas and the farmer bought his " bargain," bought the bucking, blaze-faced broncho.

* * * * *

On the hillside over yonder there's a grave without a tombstone, with no marble shaft or tablet to relate the touching story. But the farmer man is dead, sir.

CHAPTER XIII.

A DOG FALL WITH A TEXAS LIAR.

The other day I was standin by the lonely and neglected spot that marks the last restin place of that sturdy old soldier-statesman, Gen. Sam Houston, and I couldn't help from thinkin a whole lot. Among other things, I thought of old Mart Mayo, the natural-born liar, and some of the marvelsome stories he has told us about his boyhood days with the hero of San Jacinto. To tell the cold and sober truth, I have been thinkin about my old friend Mart a heap here of late. I took up a notion and have been holdin onto it for many years to the general extent that Rocky Creek, the spot that is always near and dear to me, could beat the whole discovered world when it comes to turnin out the best and the finest offshoots of the human family.

From the early settlement of this country, it has always been that whensoever you got hard run for poets and preachers and statesmen and liars, all you had to do was to back your cart down into the Rocky Creek range, call for your goods and git the best in the land. And naturally, of course, havin sprung from the aristocracy of simple homes and honest hearts and hard knuckles in that same strip of woods myself, I am more than proud of the record.

THERE ARE LIARS AND LIARS.

But I have found out here lately that there are liars and liars, and they don't all hail from Rocky Creek by a blame sight. I struck up a passin acquaintance with a Texas liar the other day, and since then I have been feelin the least little bit oneasy with regards to the great and growing reputation of the gorgeous and gifted Mart Mayo and the honor and glory of dear old Rocky Creek.

It aint necessary, I reckon, to take out papers of compellment to make you understand that me and the Texas liar took up together right away and got powerful thick on short acquaintance. When he got on the cars he took a seat and set down

next to me. He was a long tall gobbler—about six feet and two axe handles to the first limb—with iron gray hair, a turkey red nose, long chin whiskers and a flea-bitten complexion. He didn't look the least smidgen like our Mart Mayo, but if they was both on the track in a lyin match, whilst he might not beat old Mart, I am satisfied he would make the track devilish dusty for a few heats anyhow.

Now as to clothes, old Mart ain't to say very fixy. Along about this time of year he in generally wears a straw hat with the brim tore off. It didn't make any difference with him about the bay windows in the gable end of his breeches, which the same likewise also he may wear socks, or he may wear nothin on his feet but a loose fittin pair of carpet rug slippers. He will go on with his work and whittle and use tobacco and tell lies, and then tell lies and use tobacco and whittle day in and day out. And he don't give a durn for what other folks do or think or say. If there is a natural born free white American citizen in all this southern country I reckon it must be that same Mart Mayo.

But it is way yonder different with the Texas liar. He is rather stylish and more dresser-like in his general appearments. He wears a good broad-gauge hat with a nickel-plated trace chain for a band; also a pritty flanel shirt laced up in front with the strings tied into a double bow not; likewise a new pair of boots with red tops and high heels, and his breeches stnffed in from the top.

"They tells me that everything is pore out there in Alabamy—pore lands, pore stock, pore folks and pore ways," the Texas liar opened up after puttin a new half sole on his wad of tobacco, leanin back till he set down on his shoulders and hangin his feet over three or four empty seats in front of us. "How in the thunderations do you fellers ont there manage to dodge the porehouse and the graveyard at the same time?"

"Well, sir," say I, after sizin my man up as best I could, "you are about half right and about half wrong. We don't have no graveyards in Alabama—they have gone clean and clear out of fashion. The land is powerful pore in spots—too pore to sprout cow peas or grow bull nettles, but if crops are extra short

and times uncommon hard we can chaw rosum and eat fried light wood knots and drink branch water and keep out of the porehouse. And we have got a monstrous healthy country over there. People used to die in that country sometimes, but they don't do that way now. They just live on and on and on till they turn to something good to eat or dry up and blow away. Now and then and here and there you will run across a man that put most too much salt in his dirt when he was a boy and has turned into what they call a petrified rock. But they don't get sick and lay down and die like they use to, and whensoever a fellow citizen gits old and wrinkled and broke down and tired out and weary with life and takes up a fool notion to commit suicide, all he has got to do is to pack up and move his washin out of Alabama. Generally speakin, in three days after he crosses the state line and strikes a country where they sell coffins and build graveyards he will keel over and go dead. We may be pore folks and we may have pore ways, stranger, but you can bet your chin whiskers that we have got a monstrous healthy country where I come from."

THE TEXAS LIAR'S TURN.

A dead silence then fell upon us for somethin like a pair of minits, whilst the Texas liar looked me over from head to foot with a look that seemed to sound to say: "I'll see you right there and go you three better."

"I don't mind tellin you on the dead square, stranger, that according to the family records I was born in Alabama," he went on presently. "But mind you, it was without my knowledge or consent. I trust I have got forgive for it by now, and I don't talk about it much out here in Texas. The general opinion around here is to the extent that I am a native-born Texan, and by thunder if you don't want to stir up hot stuff you mustn't break into that glorious reputation.

"But wait now about a week and let me tell you how it was. Many and many a year ago my folks moved from Georgy to Texas and we sorter had to come through Alabamy. There want a white face anywhere in that country then—nothin but wild Indians and bear and gophers. We camped one night on a

high hill clost by a river, and right there is where I got aboard this wayward and wicked old world. I have heard people tellin it here of late years that a few days after we pulled up stakes and moved on the old Indian chief that had been leadin a pack of the redskin devils on our trail from the camp signs that we had left behind us, give out a big war whoop and sung out at the top of his voice, 'Alabamy!' which the same means, 'Here we strike camp,' or words to that extent. I have also been told that they have built a town right there over the very spot where we struck camp and I come into the world, and call it Montgomery. Am I pluggin the bull's-eye along there, stranger?"

"We've got a city over yonder by that name," says I, "and it is way yonder the best city in the state. You can buy anything you could call for there, exceptin medicine or a coffin. We don't have no coffins there; no doctors, no medicine, and no graveyards. The country is too infernal healthy for any of them things. We had one doctor that come in there some years ago, but he is gone now. I can't remember now exactly what come of him, but if he didn't move out of the state and die, he is more than apt to be in the poorhouse. We don't get rich fast nor fly very high over there, but if you are lookin for a healthy country—"

"You will have to excuse me, stranger—not this year—some other year praps," resumed the Texas liar. "As I have said before, I was borned in Alabamy, but that happened to me at a very young age when I couldn't help myself. You didn't know it of course, and you musn't give me away on it, but I was the first white child born in Alabamy. Now I reckon if you could say you was the first natural born citizen of Alabamy, and borned on the very spot where they have since built the finest city in the state at that, you would be forever and eternally blowin and braggin and blusterin about it. But with me it is a graveyard secret, and a pint in my general records in regards to which I sing durn low and say nothin much in particlar worth mentionin."

"If you will jest keep on at the present lick, stranger," I put in right there, "you will soon make yourself a thousand years old."

"Well, by thunder, it is perfectly all right, stranger," he come back at me quick as a flash. "If tellin the great unwashed truth and givin you the history of Alabamy makes me as old as Methusideck I can't help it. The truth is mighty and bound to win."

GREAT WESTERN SPEED.

"This infernal train must be makin up for lost time," says I, as we rounded a curve at the rate of fifty miles the hour.

"Well, by thunder, she is moving along tolerable peart," says the Texas liar. "But, stranger, you don't know what western speed is till you git out on the plains in the cattle country. Do they run trains fast in Alabamy now?"

"They make fair to middlin time, but nothin to brag on," says I. "Very frequent I have been on the cars when they got over the ground at such a brisk rate till the telegraph poles looked to me exactly like the teeth in a fine comb."

"I reckon probably that is right good time back there in the old states, but stranger, you ought to ride a cannon ball train over the plains of west Texas, where they make speed that is speed. I went out in that country onct to see some kin-folks. The evenin that I started back I poked my head out of the car window jest as the train was pullin out to kiss my sweetheart goodbye. Reckon I kissed her? Not much if any. The train shot out at such a rate till before I knowed it I had kissed a cow in the mouth two miles up the road.

"I recollect mighty well on that same trip we stopped at a little station out there on the bald prairies and picked up one of these dude hunters from the city. He had been down there shootin pluffers and prairie hens and wanted to go home. He had on a fancy huntin suit, a game bag and other new fangled contrapsions and fixments, and a fine dun-colored pinter dog (the dude said he was a grayhound) was followin along at his heels. He wanted to take his dog on the train with him, but the conductor says no. He wanted to put him in the express car, but the conductor says that was positive agin the rules of the company. Then the dude lowed if it was all the same with the company he would like to tie his dog to the tail end of the train

and lead him home, and the conductor says he could work it that way if he wanted to.

"So the dude pulled out his lariat and tied his dog to the tail end of the train. The train pulled out at about fifty miles to the hour and the conductor was laughin in his sleeves and wonderin in his mind what would become of that dog. He went back presently to see about it, and here was the dog lopin along at a good easy gait and the train hadn't even so much as taken the slack outen the rope. Then the conductor give the engineer a private tip to pull the stopper out and let her go down at the rate of seventy-five to a hundred miles the hour, and torectly he went back to see how much of the dog there was left, thinkin maybe he might find one end of the rope and a little sign of blood and hair. But what would you reckon he found, stranger? By thunder, he found that durn dog runnin alongside the train on three legs lickin the grease of a hot box. Yes, siree, it takes a power of speed to keep up with things out here on the plains of the great and glorious west.

"There ain't much tellin how fast and far one of them fool mule yeared rabbits could run if he was to keep on tryin. I shot at one out there onct upon a time and a stray birdshot struck him in the burr of the ear. It didn't kill him, but it kinder addled his mind so till he lost what sense he started with and went off in a ziz-zag run like a streak of lightnin. When the New Orleans papers come out the next day they told about a mule-yearred rabbit from Texas that was killed in the streets of that town the night before, and went on to say that it had a fresh birdshot wound in the burr of the ear. It was my rabbit to a dead moral certainty, but I couldn't lay claims to him at that long distance.

"Did you ever see a swift, stranger?"

"No; what is that?" says I.

"By dams, I don't know what it is, but it is plentiful out on the plains of west Texas, and it takes two men to see it—one to say here it comes and another to say there it goes."

By this time my feet and legs had gone to sleep and I was powerful durn dizzy about the head. So we called it a dog fall as to the first round and quit.

CHAPTER XIV.

ROCKY CREEK PHILOSOPHY.

I maintains all along that the single shots hit the hardest, and short speeches are the best. The finest stump speech I ever heard was made by that old friend of mine when he was elected justice of the peace. He had whipped a hard fight and win a close race and when a committee of seventeen pulled him out and called for a speech, he came back at the crowd as follows :

"Fellow citizens : For six long and weary weeks I have been lickin your boots, and now, by gum, you can lick mine."

It takes a powerful smart man to say a whole passle in a few words, but I am willin to play my hand that way for once.

SHORT SERMONS.

If a man's religion ain't worth fighting for it ain't worth pickin up in the big road.

A man that plays the fiddle ain't quite as bad as the man that plays the devil.

Thomas Jefferson use to say that religion and politics wouldn't mix up together very well, and Thomas was always right.

A sheepskin ain't always big enough to hide the wolf's teeth, but it takes some men a long time to git the lesson.

The meanest men in this world go through cold sober, with a constant weather eye on the 11th commandment : " Don't Git Caught."

If there is anything in religion to cry about, I simply haven't got any as yet.

When the political pot slops over and the campaign goes up to the fightin pitch, it is a good time of year to talk religion to a man on the other side.

There are some men in this world so rotten mean till the devil would throw up his job if he could to keep from bein caught in their company.

My religion is short and sweet and simple. Put your trust in the good Lord, and keep your liver movin.

A man that can plow a frisky horse in a new ground full of stumps all day and not let any cuss words slip has got genuine religion and plenty of it.

A man may ride a poor horse, and borrow his neighbor's paper, and let his wife tote the wood and water, and still have religion, but I have got some mighty serious doubts about it.

The best man in this world to let alone is one of these fightin Methodist preachers.

Whenever a preacher kicks out of the traces and runs to politics, you can generally put him down as either a natural born fool or a powerful sorry preacher.

Sometimes I look back down the line at the tight places I have come through and the close calls I have had, and then there is nothin that fills the bill like a few stanzas of "Amazin Grace."

The devil ain't losin no time nor givin himself any worrimment about the man that plays cards and drinks whisky durin the week, and then goes around w-e-a-r-i-n the yoke and b-e-a-r-i-n the cross on Sunday. The spider and the fly are both in the parlor.

If religion made me as solemcholy and sorry lookin as some folks I know, I reckon I would have to take my chances with the great unwashed.

As long as you stick to the "Old Ship" you can count on three square meals a day three hundred and sixty-five days in the year.

I believe in salvation by grace, as a free gift for nothin, and not of works lest any man might blow and brag about it.

GENERAL FARM NOTES.

Many a man can write big about the farmers and the farm, when at the same time he wouldn't know a bull-tongue scooter from a buzzard-wing sweep, or a stack of hay from a hornet's nest.

You can't plant campaign literature and raise a good crop of corn. Don't try.

In order to make a good farm hand a man must rest some, and sleep a right smart, and eat a whole passle.

Money makes the mare go, but it can't make a good grub go and stay when the machinery runs down and the bottom drops out of your stomach.

The way to be a farmer from Farmersville is to pull off your coat and roll up your sleeves and spit in your hands and pitch in.

About the most easiest and quickest way to git there is to hit the grit and pull out and go.

What you can't git for push and pluck wouldn't be worth havin if you got it.

The old farm will always keep peace in your mind and plenty in the pantry if you only treat her kind and gentle and tickle her bosom right frequent.

Blessed is the man that don't want much, and knows right where to go and git it.

Better is a happy home, and peace and quiet therewith, than a few years of hurry and worry and highflyin, and then the gable end of a misspent life.

Briars and berries grow together, and if you git the berries you will have to go through the briars.

Take a good average agricultural editor and drop him down on a well regulated farm, and he would be like a blind calf in high oats, or a bobtail dog at a leg walkin. The man that knows the woods is the man to blaze the way.

Thinkin is monstrous hard work. I would ruther split rails, or drive three yokes of oxen, or clear up a new-ground any day if the pay was the same.

When you hear a man snortin and cavortin around about the "down trodden farmers," git out your little note book and write him down as a candidate for office, and you will plug the bull's-eye nine times in ten.

The breath of the clover aint any sweeter to me than the odor of sausage meat and spareribs and cracklin bread.

Savin is a great art. It will beat close fist and big talk any day in the year and give them three in the game to start on.

I am bound to have my own personal opinions of a man that has been livin in this country fifty years without stakin off a claim, and still ain't got a little nest somewhere that he can call his own.

It is somethin like drivin a six mule team backwards uphill for a man to meet his honest debts and git rich runnin a farm. But he can live comfortable and stay young and die happy if he plays the game natural and right.

It will pay to swap your pointer dog for a cat that has fits, and then shoot the cat.

There are two men in my acquaintance—a third-class farmer, and a bellused and broke down politician—that will never do anything for the good of their country till they die.

A farmer that has nothin to look to and nothin to promise his family, and nothin to bank on but his muscle is travellin the blamdest lonesomest and rockiest road in the country.

The natural increase is the strongest card in the farmer's hand.

Even in the reglar farm work, there is nothin that pays like keepin up a good general apearance. People will read a man's sign accordin to the way he totes it.

Laziness and hard times run together as natural and easy as battercakes and molasses.

I found out years and years ago that a man can git most anything he wants in this world if he will only work for it and ask for it, and I have been workin and askin henceforward ever since.

It is a good plan to give your crop the first plowin before you plant it.

The farmer that rides a fat horse and a screakin saddle can always git a lift when he needs it.

IN POLITICS.

Show down like a man when you are called—cards or no cards.

Sometimes American politics, like the peace of God, passeth all understandin.

Many a risin statesman in this country is busy greasin the seat of his breeches in the hopes of slidin down the Alliance plank into office.

The "tumble bug politician" is a man that looks one way and pushes the other at the same time.

Even in politics it pays to tote fair.

A man with a farm to run and feed bills to meet has got blame little time for savin the country and runnin the general government.

It is better to play the hand you hold for all there is in it than to draw to others you know not of.

Every man ought to git a divorce and hang it out between his political opinions and his personal feelins.

Keep in the middle of the road and vote the straight ticket every clatter. Be honest and virtuos, and you'll be happy.

Mark the man with a new political platform in his inside pocket and a stump speech on his tongue, for the end of that man is vanity and vexation.

Next to the man that will promise anything to git elected,

the blamdest, biggest fool in this country is the man that would give a cent a thousand for the promise.

Patriotism is a good thing, I reckon, in its right and proper place, but it wont pay the store account nor buy a new frock for the baby.

CHAPTER XV.

REV. ZEB NEWTON'S CAREER.

Preachers don't mix very well with politics, and neither will politics mix together very well with preachers. Old Squire Wilson use to say in his plain, blunt, homely way, that whenever he saw a preacher wadin into politics and runnin for office he always put him down as a "natural born fool or a dam rascal." Excuse the cuss words, please, but the squire was honest in everything he said, and he had a head on him as big as a hamper basket and as level as a squash.

Now, it always seems to me like preachers ought to be the best and most humblest men in the world, and takin them as they come they are. The Good Book says they are livin epistles, not written with ink, but with the Spirit, not graven on tablets of stone, but on the fleshly tablets of the heart. Yet, still at the same time I have seen some preachers that want a blame bit better than lots of plain, everyday sort of people like me and you, my hearers.

There are tricks in every trade, they say—politics in particular—and a real smart preacher knows it. Uncle Tommy Pickens (but he went dead long ago) told me once that they had honest politics in his young days. I was glad to hear they did, but a man is bound to believe what he sees with his own eyes, and my own private, prevalent opinion is that American politics have always been politics. Whensomever a man branches out into politics, with his off eye on two or three fat offices it won't be very long usually before he will be pullin the ropes and loadin the dice and gummin up the cards so as to carry the game his own way.

But since I come to think about it right serious, I think maybe I might count on three or four of my left-hand fingers all the good preachers that I have known to git hornsnougged into politics and teliterally ruined. Good preachers are more than willin to tend to their own business accordin to the way they

have been called, and let other people run the government and save the country.

A PREACHER'S TUMBLE.

The Reverent Zeb Newton took the longest and hardest tumble into politics of any preacher that comes to my mind at the present writin. Zeb was the son of old man Jeremiah Newton that lived and died over on Murder Creek. His father and grandfather and two or three of his brothers was all preachers before him, and some of them could make the devil powerful lonesome and sick of his job when they wanted to. A better man than Jeremiah Newton never raised a tune or turned a sinner from the broad road that leads to everlastin night. And when Zeb started out everybody thought he would make somethin extra in the way of a preacher. He was as smart as a steel trap, with a right smart schoolin and plenty of good trainin. But from what come to pass after that it looks like some other man must of been called and wouldn't go and Zeb answered to the call.

The first year that Zeb went to preachin he was called to a little church down in the hills at a little place they call Shady Grove, and he preached there every third Sunday. For a while the people were mighty well pleased with him, but somehow he didn't wear much. He had fixed up a fine sermon, takin for his text that verse about how Peter's wife's mother lay sick abed with a fever, and he preached that same sermon every time till it was about wore plum out. By-and-by one good sister got up in meetin and said how she had heard about Peter's wife's mother bein sick abed with a fever long enough, and she thought it was high time for the old lady to get well, or either die and be done with it.

So after that Zeb wouldn't preach to any one church for a regular thing very long at the time. He got to be something of a circuit rider and a great hand for holdin protracted meetins, sayin how he needed a bigger field and a wider range for his work.

THE FATAL BACK STEP.

Gradually by degrees Zeb worked up four or five churches in a circuit of about forty miles from where he lived, and they

kept him goin every Sunday in the month. The deacons and elders of the various and different churches chipped in together and bought him a good gentle saddle horse and set him up about right for business.

Everything rocked along smooth and all right till early in the comin fall, when Zeb got to makin stump speeches around in the district, and playin a tolerable full hand in politics. In them good old days a man that didn't ride a fine horse and a screakin saddle want sigh high to a whirlwind in politics. So Zeb sailed in and swaps his old plug, that the deacons and elders had bought him, for a stavin fine young horse—a chestnut sorrel with flax mane and tail, ball face and three white feet. And right there is where Zeb cut the fatal back step. His new horse was a charger and a squealer, with big neck and high head, and he made a regular show everywhere he went.

On his next circuit Zeb cut a big figure with his fine young chestnut sorrel, but the change didn't take very well with the members of his churches. They didn't think it looked plum right for their preacher to be ridin around on a dancin, prancin, squealin horse. They had heard tell of his makin stump speeches, and felt a little jubious about that, but the high-headed horse, with the fuss and flurry he made and the capers he cut, was about one too many for them.

ZEB SHOWS DOWN.

The followin week a meetin of the deacons and elders was held with old Bark Log Church, and the Reverent Zeb Newton was called on to show down and give account of the way he had been behavin of late. Zeb was there on time, ridin of his fine young chestnut sorrel, and Deacon Joiner was actin chairman of the meetin.

"Brother pastor," says the deacon, "there always had ought to be a full fellowship and perfect understandin between the preacher and the church. We have come to talk business in regards to you and the churches, and we would like to hear somethin from you, a few words or such a matter, concernin the peculiar way you have been behavin yourself here lately. In the first place, we want to know how and why and wherefore

you swapped the plain saddle horse we give you for that squealin, high-headed chestnut sorrel. The members, and the good sisters in particular, don't think it looks exactly right and nice and proper for their preacher to be tearin and dashin around the country on that sort of a horse. Was there anything particular the matter with the horse we bought for you last spring?"

"Nothin seriously to speak of," says Zeb.

"Want he safe and gentle and sound, Brother pastor?" the deacon went on.

"Gentle as a cat and safe as walkin," says Zeb.

"Well now, brother pastor," says the deacon, "we would like for you to tell us what you meant by swappin off the good horse we give you for the squealin chestnut sorrel."

Well, brethren," says Zeb, "since you are bound to know all these things, I am goin to tell you the plain, naked, unwashed truth, so help me. I made that swap and gives twenty-five dollars to boot because I wanted the chestnut sorrel, not that I am so proud and high-headed myself, but so that when I am dead and gone my children could look back and say their father once owned a whole entire horse."

No doubt the show down seems all satisfactual to Zeb himself, but it didn't stave off the deacons and elders. They held out and stuck to it that a preacher ought to let posterity look out for itself. They had done a heap more for Zeb than posterity had ever done for him. And then there was the stump speeches, which Zeb couldn't git around in a way to satisfy the meetin, and presently they passed a resolution by a standin vote callin another preacher, and leavin Zeb out to play big man as much as he pleased on his squealin chestnut sorrel.

FROM BAD TO WORSE.

Henceforwards after that Zeb went on from bad to worse and a heap more of it. When they had him up before the meetin he wouldn't let on like he was takin much stock in politics, whereas right then he was a candidate for Congress on the sly. There was already two full tickets in the field, but somethin had been said about the Old Line Whigs runnin Zeb in as a dark horse on the home stretch, and he was rubbin down

and puttin packs in his feet and gettin himself together in a good shape for a grand burst of speed. But when the race comes off the dark horse was ruled off of the track and the straight Democratic ticket won by three lengths in a canter.

In the next campaign Zeb played his cards so as to git put out on the reglar Whig ticket, but when the race was called he was beaten in straight heats, though he did manage to make the track monstrous dusty for the winner, which was also another Democrat.

By the time another election rolls around Zeb had flopped over and was pullin with the Democrats, and they entered him in another race for Congress. Then some of the old Democratic landmarks raised a right smart rumpus and swore by all that was good and bad that they want goin to vote for a man that would quit preachin and spreadin the gospel truth to ride a chestnut sorrel horse and run for office. On election day a whole passle of Democrats voted with the other side, or stayed at home and wouldn't vote at all, so the Whig ticket went through by a scratch, and Zeb was still bruisin around with the lonesome minority.

But a few cold freeze-outs didn't jar Zeb's hand or stop him from runnin for office. He had sniffed the political flesh pots from afar, and he was bound to break in, or skin his nose tryin. He run with first one side and then the other. He was a Know-Nothin and a Whig and a Democrat from time to time, and after that he was a dyed-in-the-wool Republican. He run for Congress and then for the Legislature and after that for county judge. He was a standin candidate for most anything he could git. Wet or dry, heads or tails, it was all the same to Zeb. He was everything and anything to win. But he played a losin game clean through till at last he got elected justice of the peace for Tucker's Mill Beat.

For a long time after he got to runnin for office so reglar and promiscus Zeb would branch out and preach now and then, particular durin big meetin times. But he finally comes to that pass where instid of sayin "brethren and friends," or "my dyin congregation," he would most generally say "ladies and gentlemen," or "fellow citizens," or somethin of that sort till finally

he had to quit preachin for good and all and stick to politics and the chesnut sorrel.

The last time I was down in Tucker's Mill Beat they told me that Zeb made a good average justice of the peace, but he had took to drinkin right hard and cussin and fightin tolerable constant. I use to run with Zeb some when we was both young and single and full of devilment. He had some mighty good pints to start on and it makes me feel sorry when I think about what he has come to—from so high up to so low down. But when a preacher kicks out of the traces and runs to politics you never can tell right exactly where he will make a landin. It was so before the war, and it is so till yet.

CHAPTER XVI.

POLITICS ON PANTHER CREEK.

"Comin on down to the present time bein," said Ben Cris-Weaver the last night he spent with me, "we have got things into a rather bad shape down in the Panther Creek range this summer. To tell you the plain, unwashed truth, Rufe, we have had too little straight work and religion, and too durn much politics and wet weather. It looks to me like all the people in general have cut loose and turned out to run the government, while the country is runnin itself as best it can and goin down to that golnation powwows with every foot up and toe nails a draggin. I have never seen the like of grassy crops, and family fuss, and church feuds, and risin statesmen, and fresh hatched patriots, and backslidin, and cussin, and wranglin, and tanglin in all my borned days. That is one reason why I lit out for old Rocky to see you and take a little breathin spell.

ON THE INSIDE.

"In orderment to give you a look on the inside, Rufe, let me tell you somethin about the way we have tore up the ground and went to smash in the old settlement this year. The seasons hit exactly right along in the spring and we never started off with better chances for a bully crop. But the people all took to politics and run the thing deeper and deeper, and it looks like the hotter they made the fight the hotter the weather got, and the harder and faster the rains come down. Seems to me like the good Lord had to send a heavy and constant outpourin of rain water, likewise on the just as well as the unjust, to keep things from breakin out with a fire and burnin up. Even with all that, most of the fodder got fired and parched up and withered away, and the rust and blight is now leavin the cotton fields in the red and brown and yellow leaf. To ride through the old settlement and see the sorry crops, you would think to yourself that the Panther creek folks was all out in the middle of the big road that leads over the hills and to the poorhouse.

"But yet at the same time, Rufe, the fault aint in our seasons and the general government, but ruther in our blame fool selves. You see we started out with one political party, and that is about as many as the country can put up with and save herself. But when the fight come on the Republicans come to life, and then a passle of risin statesmen and patriots and sore-heads and natural born kickers got together and cussed and labored till they brought forth a branspankin new party, which the same they give out as havin been born and sent to save the fallin country and redeem the downtrod human race. Before I left home there was some talk of workin up yet another party, which they say will wipe out and swallow all the rest that have come before. The fourth party men have give it out that both of the old parties, and also the young one, are all rotten and rank and rancid to the core, and how in the thunder they are goin to make one good clean party by swallowin up three rotten ones is more than I can worry through. But anyhow, that is the way they talk it. I am only givin it to you as it was guv out to me.

SOME CHURCH RUMPUSES.

"I am sorry to tell you, Rufe," Ben Cris went on with a solemncholy, way-off-yonder look on his face, "but the first church rumpus to come up out of politics in the settlement happened over at Pilgrim's Rest Primitive Baptist church. There is where our good old fathers and mothers and all of their people offered up their praises and thanksgivin in them better days of long ago. There is where me and you met for the first time as barefoot, shirt-tail boys and struck up a family acquaintance which has held us together in brotherly love from that day down to this blessed hour. There is where we first learned to jine in with the general congregation durin a three days meetin and sing them familiar old hymns like 'The Partin Hand,' and 'How Firm a Foundation,' and 'Blest Be The Tie That Binds,' 'Amazin Grace,' 'How Beauteous Are Their Feet,' and so forth and so on. It was there by grace I first saw the light. It was there I put in my membership, and there it will stay, so long as I tarry in this vain and fleetin world. It is there that many of the Sanders and Weaver generation sleep the

long sleep, and if I can have my way about it when the time comes for me to turn my toes up to the sod and the daisies, they will lay me down to sleep in the Old Pilgrim's Rest graveyard.

"But I started out to tell you about the church rumpus," says Ben Cris, comin back to the main question and brushin a tear from his off eye. "You know we old school Baptists don't take much stock in new-fangled contraptions, neither with regards to religion or politics. We would rather have straight goods in ourn, without any extra touches or fancy trimmings. We jest simply plant our feet on the old puncheon of truth and principle, and there we are from dewy morn till rosy eve, and from supper time till breakfast.

"Well, along in the spring one of the young members, Josh Andrews, took and jined in with a secret order they call the Farmers' Allowance, and in doin so he had to run right roughshod over the rules of the church and the principles on which the faith is planted. I reckon maybe Josh want very sound in the doctrines nohow, cause the next thing we heard from him he was whoopin up the new-born party as agin the straight ticket. Now, of course we had to bring Josh up before the church and call on him to show some reasons for why he had give up the faith and departed from the straight and proper way. Josh maintained from the jump that he was as good a Christian as any other man in the church, but at the same time he got red in the face and swelled up and tightened his belly-band, and hardened his heart, and stiffened his neck, and never would give in any reasons for strayin off on the new trail. So there was nothin left for the church to do but to turn him out and leave him alone to go his own way. Then to make a bad mess still worse and more of it, old man Andrews got his back up because we had turned his son Josh out, and at the next meetin he came up and unjined himself and got his name scratched off of the church books. It want so very long after that till it leaked out that the old man had took off the bridle and followed his son Josh into the Allowance. If you will notice, Rufe, whenever a man lets the sap run up, and gets mad with the church for hewin to the line, chips or no chips, and starts out to do somethin for spite, there

simply ain't no tellin where he will land. He is liable to pitch in and jine a circus if one was to come along by his house.

"That was along in the first days of spring and from that time on old man Andrews never did come about the church until about two weeks ago. We had a three days' meetin over at Pilgrim's Rest and on Sunday the old man was there. He hung around on the outside till after meetin was opened and then he come in and flopped down on a back seat. The Rev. Cas Dinkins, our preacher, preached a powerful stirrin sermon and then the congregation took up and sung that sweet old song, 'Return, O, Wanderer, Return.' Well, at the close of the services old man Andrews returned. He come back with fears and tears and tremblin, and the church opened wide her arms to give him a welcome home. The old man says how he was wrong and the church was right, as usual. 'I was mad and blind, and a wayward, stumbling fool when I made the break,' says he, 'but I have never seen a happy day nor had a good night's rest since I wandered off out of the good old way, and you don't know how glad and thankful I am, brethren, to be one of you and one among you once more.'

"Josh is still meanderin around in the by-ways and highways of the outside world, but he aint past all hopes yet. The old man let his son Josh pull him out of the church, and I think from the way things are workin now the old man will yet be able to pull his son Josh out of the Allowance. Turn about is fair play, and they will both feel more at home in old Pilgrim's Rest church.

SPLIT HER WIDE OPEN.

"But our little church stew want nothin, Rufe, to the rucus the Methodist people had over at old Pine Top church. When the campaign got tuned up to the fightin pitch it seems like about one-half of the members bolted and went off on the new party trail, while the other half held the fort and stuck out for the straight ticket. It had so happened that the preacher was also one of the old faith and give it out that he would stand by the old lick-log till the cows come home and the chickens flew up to roost.

"At last they held a regular church meetin for the purpose

of talkin it over together and settlin the question in peace and good order. But the more they talked and reasoned and argified the hotter they all got. The off-wing of the church wanted to turn the preacher out to graze and hire another pastor, but the reglar wing jumped on the movement and it was lost by a scratch, as it were. So there they had it, up and down, and over and under, till by and by they landed the church right slap ker dab in the middle of a big mess and split her wide open. The off wing pulled itself out by the roots, so to say, and gave it out that they would build up a church of their own, while some of the members took out and quit for good and all. I'll tell you, Rufe Sanders, I have seen more cussin church members this year than I had ever heard tell of before in twenty years. Somethin is wrong somewhere, and I reckon we must be wadin out too infernal deep in the political waters.

"From all I can hear the political split in the Methodist church is runnin down the line and all through the circuit, and one of the circuit riders told me the other day that the off wing was talkin about takin the muddle up before the comin conference but what they would have their rights. I reckon maybe if the conference will take and give the whole business a good all around shakin up, them that belong in the church will stay there, and them that don't will land on the outside. I have lived long enough to find out that a first-class shakin up is about the best thing that can happen to a church, or either to a political party. It is as good as a dost of calomel or a spring cleanin.

FIRED THE PREACHER OUT.

"But the Reverent Sol Conway, pastor of the new Christian church over at Pleasant Ridge, had about the hardest time of any other preacher in the Panther Creek country. All the members of the church but two lit out and run off on the new party trail, but the preacher held fast to the straight ticket. You remember Sol's mother and father I reckon. Well, they was both old school Baptists, and better folks than them never breathed the breath of life. So you see, Sol never has got clean over his raisin till yet. He is a little off on religion, but still sound and solid in politics.

“ But still he didn’t have but two members that would stay with him and stick to him. Most of them was down on politics from general principles and didn’t believe in votin nohow, but when they did take np a notion to go and vote they wanted to vote with a new party. Well, presently they held a meetin to haul their preacher over the coals. The game didn’t work their way at first, as Sol give it out that he was goin to stand his ground and fight it out under the old flag, if it took all the summer and a few weeks in the fall. A movement was then made by one of the members to turn the preacher out of the church, and it went through a whirlin. The vote was mighty nigh anonymous agin the preacher, so he had to throw up the job and back down and out of the pulpit. They are yet without a pastor, and haven’t had no preachin from that time on, but I think they have been holdin political meetings in church of some sort two or three times a week. I reckon maybe they won’t need any more preachin till all the elections are over with, and by that time they will be willin to hire Sol over if he wants the job.

“ I thought when I started off that I would tell you about some of the family feuds and fights we have had, grown out of politics. But we can put that off for the last, and I will give you the rest of the story before I light out for my old shanty down on Panther creek.”

CHAPTER XVII.

ANDY LUCAS AND BLEV SCROGGINS PHILOSOPHIZE.

This is a thunderin big old world that we live in, my hearers, and it takes a heap of people—and all sorts of people—to make it up. And the best and quickest way to see humanity as she is, and read human nature as it was writ, is to go back to the woods and mix and mingle with the folks. Ride along through the country and keep your eye open and see what you can see. You will find one man makin money and gettin rich and another flat busted and headed for the poorhouse. You will see one man makin bully crops, and ridin fat stock, and keepin his fences up ten rails high, bull tight and pig proof. And right over on the next hill, with only a cross fence between them, you will find another man makin sorry crops, ridin a poor old flopped mule with a rope-rein bridle, and his fences ramshackled and tumbled down and settin seven ways for Sunday. Is the fault with the man, or with his general surroundins? The fault, dear Brutus, is in partly both.

THE DIFFERENCE IN MEN.

Accordin to human history, and so far as the records run, there aint but only three or four ways for a man to git rich in this world. He can be borned into it, he can marry into it, he can work for it, or he can steal it. But there is a heap of difference in different men. One man will make money where another man wouldn't make a livin. Some men can raise the bulliest sort of crops on land where others wouldn't raise nothin but a rumpus with the general government. Sometimes it is because one man is smart and stirrin and shifty, and the other is lazy and triflin and idlesome. Then again sometimes it is because one man was born lucky, and the other one was born at the wrong time of the moon. Some men make money because they are rottten stingy, and others don't make it because they are rotten sorry. Some men are good at anything, and some are

good for nothin, and some are only middlin. That was so in the old Bible times, and it is so till yet. It is nature, and it must be right.

But at the same time it has always been marvelsome strange to me how some men work so blame little and seldom and live so well and git along so smooth and easy. I can point you out two of the thriftiest and shiftiest men in the Rocky Creek settlement—men that are clever and honest and good citizens in a general way—men that live well at home and have plenty to go on and settle up their store accounts before the first of January as reglar as the year rolls around—and then I will bet the best pair of mules in the Sanders family that I have put more hard work behind me in two weeks than they have turned off in six months. Don't you know who I am talkin about? They are my personal and particlar friends, and as good a pair as ever man held—Blev Scroggins and Andy Lucas.

You couldn't start out today and work up a horse race, or a chicken fight, or a house raisin, or a political meetin anywhere in forty miles around but what Blev and Andy would be the first men there and the last ones to leave the grounds. They have always got plenty of time to spare from their crops, and a little pocket change to meet the runnin expenses. And for years and years it has been a great puzzle and pesterment to the neighbors how Blev and Andy can hold their rapid gaits and still keep their feet under them. I have ciphered on it considerable myself—and if there is a livin man that ought to find out it is me—but with all my figgerations I couldn't work out the sum.

"BREAD AND MEAT FOR THE HUNGRY."

Durin these hard times, with so much talk goin on about sorry crops and tight money, I had been thinkin that maybe Blev and Andy would have to show down, and the rock bottom facts in the case would then leak out. But instid of that they have both put in here of late to ridin around over the country, talkin politics, settlin up the money questions and tellin the people what they must do to be saved. Whereas and howsomever, I am glad to tell you that they ain't runnin off after any new-fangled notions or third party Jack-o-merlanterns. They live

most too clost to my house for that. They have some new and pecurious notions about things in general, but they want the people to do their part, and then they are willin—more than willin—for the plain, old-fashioned Daylight Democracy to run the government.

It so happened that Blev and Andy both rounded up at my place last Sunday evenin and dropped in together to pass the time of day with me.

"How are we coming by this time, boys?" says I.

"Fair to middlin," says Andy.

"Nothin to brag on and nothin to grumble at," says Blev.

"I have been as busy as forty thousand bees in one tar bucket durin the past week," Andy went on to say, "but bless gracious I am still up and able to do about. And I ain't been busy doin nothin as you would make believe, neither. I have been over in the hill country settin up with old man Josh Ridley and tryin my durndest to bring him around straight on the money question. Dadburn a mule name Beck, and a nigger name Tobe, and a white man by the name of Josh! But as I was goin on to tell you, old man Josh Ridley is now a standin candidate for the insane Siloam. He is plum wild and reckless on money matters. He is as crazy as seventeen fools in one drove on the question of free silver. He talks to his fool self and his neighbors and to everybody else—talks all day, and I reckon he dreams all night—about free silver! The old man has worked a notion into his head to the extent that if our Congressman would put in a bill for free silver and push it through, the Government would send out wagons loaded to the guards with silver dollars, and scatter them free and plentiful and promiscus like along the big road, so every man could take a corn sack and fill her up and go home rich. I hate to tell it on every man that lives in the same country with me, but it is the naked truth if I ever told it. And the very idea of such bully times has got the old man off of his balance and out of plum with regards to his politics. I told him that the time never has come and never will come when a man could take his hamper basket and go to the general government and git somethin for nothin. I told him that if the government was to pitch in and turn out his ginhouse

full of silver money he could not put a dollar nor a dime into his flanks until he got some farm producements of some sort to throw on the market and draw it out. But you see, there is so infernal much talk goin on about free silver, free silver, free silver! That is what has brought on such a sad and terrible confusionment in old man Josh Ridley's head. You know for a long time he has been the lead dog of the political pack in his beat, and somebody must pull him in line and hold him down to the straight and narrer way. Edicate the masses, Rufe. There's the pint—edicate the masses—help the helpless, and lift up the lowly—bread and meat for the hongry—rest for the weary, and water for them that can't take theirn straight.

POWERFUL PESTERIN QUESTION.

"You can hear a heap of talk about free silver, Rufe," Andy went on, "but have you ever saw any of it with your own eyes? Not any to speak of, I reckon. Free silver is one of the things you hear tell of so durn frequent and see so durn never. But there is many a good and honest man in this country like old man Josh that don't know what you are drivin at when you talk about free silver. They think free means free for everybody. It does sorter sound that way on first blush, but some people don't know that free silver means that the government will take your old spoons, or your raw silver or silver bunyun, as some folks calls it, and make it up into money and not charge you anything for the work. It is like taking your corn to a mill where they will grind it into meal and take out nothin for toll. But how in the thunderations is that goin to help me or you or old man Josh Ridley? My old lady aint got no old silver spoons to fling in, and I know durn well his aint got none cause I eat at his house the other day, and their spoons are like ourn—genuine pewter, and not the finest article of that. The only silver I saw around there was one of these old-fashioned, open-face silver watches, which the same I reckon it has been in the Ridley family a hundred years, and if the government had it they couldn't bile more than four bits worth of good silver bunyun out of it. And then, a heap of people can't tell exactly what you are drivin at when you talk about the rations between

silver and gold—sixteen to one, twenty to one, and so forth and so on. Somebody must go on and tell them that we mean to put sixteen times as much silver in a silver dollar as we put gold in a gold dollar, whereas the silver dollar will be sixteen times bigger than a gold dollar, so as to make the gold in the country hold out as long as the silver holds out. My general understanding is that the country is long on silver and short on gold, as it were, and gold is worth more in the shuck than silver is worth in the burr, or words to that extent. But these little questions are powerful pesterin to a heap of well-meanin people, and there is where old man Josh has got all mixed and muddled up with himself.

“No, I can't say for positive that I have got the old man square on his feet again, though I don't reckon he is hardly as bad off as he has been. He has had a mighty bad case of it, Rufe, but he is on the mend now and stands a chance to pull through by a tight squeeze. At any rates, Rufe, you can see where I have done my durndest for the good of Josh Ridley in particlar and the country in general.

BLEV SCROGGINS, “BY GATLINS.”

“It may be that the mouth of Blev Scroggins aint no prayer book when it comes to talkin free silver and politics,” says Blev as soon as he could put his hand into the game, “but by Gatlins, when you want to hear from the boys across the creek and keep up with the run of the country you can always send for me or come over to my house, and git what you are lookin for. I have hearn so infernal much talk about hard times and skeerce money till I have lit out to tell the people what it is that ails us and what we must do to pull through with our trials and troubles and tribulations. I have rode and talked, and talked and rode till my horse is jaded and broke down, and I reckon if you was to look clost enough you could find some wind galls on my legs.

“What have we got to do? Knock out the pegs, by Gatlins, and go and come again. We have took the wrong fork of the roads and now we will have to go back to taw, make a cross mark and spit in it, and then start over. The merchants have got to sell less and make less percentum and the farmers have

got to buy less and eat less and wear less and pay for what they buy. The general all-round credit business would sorter do if everybody was honest and everybody knowed it. But, by Gatlins, when it comes to that pass where you must watch me whilst I watch Andy, and Andy he watches both of us, it is then about time to take out and quit. The banker watches the merchant and the merchant watches the farmer and the farmer watches everybody. For why? The merchant owes the banker and the farmer owes the merchant, and the banker he owes the government or somebody else. Then when the bank gits mashed the banker mashes the merchant and the merchant mashes the farmer and the farmer must stand and take the mashin. If you crowd the banker too clost and hot he will run over the merchant, and the merchant runs over the farmer. and then down goes the whole shootin match in one fell heap, as it were. By Gatlins, you can't run the whole entire country on a credit, when everybody is skeered to risk anybody else. That is worse than bettin on two pair when the other man holds four aces. It won't do, Rufe, it won't begin to do. In the general shakin up and straightenin out that the country has got to go through with there is goin to be rubs for the merchant and rubs for the farmer, and it is hard to tell exactly where the middleman will come out. It will be a big winnance for you in the long run, because you are one of the masses—in fact considerable of a mass all by yourself. But where will me and Andy Lucas land? We are what you mought call middlemen. We don't have much to sell and neither do we replenish and produce to any serious extent. But we buy—sometimes on a credit and sometimes for the cash. Of course we call ourselves farmers, but, by Gatlins, you know good and well that what little farmin we do wouldn't keep us ahead of the hounds. Andy swaps horses considerable, and when I aint in politics I can give you three in the game and—but that is neither here nor there. I reckon though that me and Andy can manage somehow so as to fall feet foremost in the general smashup, and forage around and do about and pick up enough comin and a gwine to keep meat in the smoke house and meal in the barrel. But, by Gatlins, it is like I tell you, Rufe. We have got to call it a draw, cut the pot and open a new game."

PUTTING THE MAIN QUESTION.

Now, as to me. I would rather not say whether Blev and Andy are right or wrong. I don't know. But I reckon that if they don't plug the bull's-eye every time, they are shootin tolerable clost around the edges. All I know and all I can say in regards to money is that I would like to see the thing fixed up so that one dollar will be as good as another dollar, whether they are gold or silver, or are made out of pewter or paper or what not. I would like for every dollar turned out by the government to stand good for a dollar's worth of dry goods or groceries, or anything else that is for sale and a man is willin to pay for, and then I would like for somebody to tell me where I can go and git the dollar. I am not givin myself any particlar worriment about free silver. That wouldn't help me, though if it would help others I don't reckon it would hurt me. If the government wants to turn it out free, Rocky Creek can take her chances with the rest of the country. But the great question of cash is the main question with me. I am neither a jumpin-jack, nor a rubber doll, nor a jointed snake, nor a cut-worm, and yet I have got to make both ends meet. And Andy Lucas is right on one general pint: "Dadburn a mule name Beck, and a nigger name Tobe, and a white man by the name of Josh."

CHAPTER XVIII.

RUFUS SANDERS' MAIDEN SPEECH.

American politics, like that peace which cometh down from above, passeth all understanding. When a man runs to politics he never can tell what sort of a hand he is goin to hold. It's a very risky and oncertain game to play at.

You see I know. I have done been and tried my hand and that's what makes me say what I do. Havin run my race and fit my fight and finished my course, I am like a man up a tree, speaking forth nothin but words of truth and soberness.

Many and many a good man has gone wrong and never got back, all on account of his dabblin in politics. The field looks very rich and temptin to a man when he stands on the outside and looks over at the high places and easy jobs and soft snaps. But it generally turns out very different when once he gits on the inside. Things aint what they seem like by a blame sight. The big fees and long profits and soft snaps don't materialize worth a hardly. Sometimes the game is worth the drive, and then again it's like fishin for trout all day and landin a mud cat late along in the evenin.

HOW TO FIND OUT.

But a man never learns much in this world till he goes to school to old lady Experience. She is about the hardest and roughest and toughest schoolmarm I ever saw, but she is a bully teacher. She can learn a man somethin whether he's got any sense or not. If she can't do no better she'll jest split his head open, put the brains in and then sew the head up again. And it aint no free school, neither. The man must pay for his learnin spot cash, as he gits it. So I learned what I know about American politics from experience. I haven't graduated yet, but I am what you might call one of the big boys of the school, I am still sayin lessons now and then, and payin the bills as I go.

I have been justice of the peace in my beat over thirty

years, and I am tolerable familiar with the pegs and the ropes now. I had a monstrous hard fight to git the office, but my nigger luck stayed with me like a brother, and after I got elected holdin the thing I own has been easy and natural enough. When the smoke of battle and dust blowed away I was on the ground floor with my pockets full of mud.

Maybe I ought to tell you somethin about that large and stormy campaign wherein I played my first hand and made my maiden speech in American politics, and I don't care if I do.

It was somewhere along in the shank of the fifties. Me and Dink Ashcroft both wanted to be justice of the peace in our beat. I was a Democrat then, the same as I am now, and Dink was one of these old-line Whigs. I was for the stock law deestrick and Dink was agin it. Dink talked out for a dog law and I preached right square agin that. But we was both for free whisky. We could shake hands across the ditch on that issue, and the voters were also with us to a man. Free whisky was a big card in politics in them good old days, and from all I can hear I reckon it is still in the deck. In the good old-fashioned politics free fights and free whisky, a fair vote and a free count, was all the go. A man that wouldn't fight anything from a catamount up to a circular saw wasn't sigh high to a whirlwind in politics before the war.

THAT MAIDEN SPEECH.

The folks got up a big barbecue and shootin match over to the cross roads one fourth of July. It was a big day and a big crowd was on hand. They was all there. After dinner some of the old bucks and bellweathers fixed up a platform by turnin a wagon-body upside down across two stumps, and called on the candidates to come forth and talk out. It so happens that my name comes first on the list, and the general boss of the meetin introduced me as one of the most promisin young men in the settlement. He didn't know how my promises would pan out, he says, but he knowed I was doin a sight of promisin. He goes on to say, furthermore, that I had been promisin and promisin till I had promised every man in the beat a place as constable, provided I got elected to the highest office in the gift of the

people. But all the same I made a stavin, stirrin speech. It must of been a ring-tail dick-nailer, for the crowd was all with me at the finish. I don't remember now what I said or how I said it. I was nervous and weak all over in spots as big as a bed quilt at the time and didn't know much about what I was sayin. But the county paper printed the proceedins of the meetin and mother she saves the paper so the children could read it and feel proud of their old daddy in their growin up. The paper gives the main pints of my speech somethin like this :

"Fellow citizens and citizenesses, Whigs and Democrats, one and all : I am a candidate for justice of peace in this beat. I want the office, I need it. I will run the office for your good in general and for my good in particular. [Loud applause and a voice : "Right you are, Rufe."'] I am a Democrat, but my good old grandfather was a Whig among the Whigs. I am a hard-shell Baptist, but mother is a shoutin Methodist and all her folks are straight-lace Presbyterians. [A voice from the crowd : "He'll do ; he covers all the ground !"] That, fellow-Democrats and brother Whigs, brings to mind a little accident that happened over at our house the other day. Two of the brethren had come home with the old folks from meetin. They was both pillars in the Methodist church. Presently they got to talkin scripture, and seems like they want travelin the same road exactly. They couldn't pull together much.

" 'You ain't no Methodist nohow,' says Elder Smith.

" 'I know I am a Methodist,' says Elder Crawford.

" 'No you ain't !'

" 'Yes I am !'

" 'But you ain't !'

" 'But I am !'

" 'You're a liar !'

" 'You're another, and the truth aint in you !'

" 'The difference between me and you,' says Elder Crawford, 'is this, I am a Methodist, but I ain't no dam fool Methodist.' [Wild applause.]

"So, fellow-citizens, while I am a Democrat, all wool and a yard wide and somethin like three feet thick, I am not a one-sided Democrat. I am for the stock and no dog law and free

whisky, and if my platform don't suit you I can change it at your earliest convenience. [Great applause and a voice from the crowd, "He's all right!"] Give me your votes, fellow-citizens, brother Democrats, and cousin Whigs, and if I don't beat the livin socks off of Dink Ashcroft you can have my ears for saddle skirts." [Loud cries of "Go on! Go on!" and music by the band.]

SOME CAMPAIGN LIES.

I made the speech of the day. Nobody else didn't speak. When it comes Dink's time to be heard from he had faded away. My speech had melted and swept everything before it and put me some lengths ahead in the race.

But I had to round up and nail down a considerable herd of campaign lies before the fight comes to a finish. Dink's gang had to do something to kill off that speech of mine, which the same they went on to say showed me to be a straddler from Straddletown. They couldn't down me on a fair, square game, so they took loadin the dice with campaign lies. They first put it out that I kept a thoroughbred horse, imported from the hifer-lutin State of Kentucky. But I proves that the said horse belonged to my uncle, and that he was nothin but a common plug and didn't have a drop of racin blood under his skin. A man that kept a blooded horse in them days had ought to stay out of politics. He was a dead cock in the pit already before the fight opened.

Then they started another yarn, which the same was that I was so clumsy and slow-motioned till it would take me ten minutes to perform the marryin act for a young couple, and that I would raise the fee to \$2. But that lie went to the wall without much nailin. Everybody knowed I would marry folks jest like my good old father did, and his recipe was about as short and sweet as a man could use and do the splicin right and proper. He didn't waste no time whatsoever, and the knot was tied before the couple had time to git shaky and skeered. They want no backin out when a pair of young folks brought theirselves up before him on a writ of come and splice us.

"Stand up. Take her hand. Both willin? One and one makes one. You're jined. Dollar, please."

Then the show was out and the knot was tied so hard and fast till nothin but death or the chancery court could loosen it.

Next thing the enemy puts it out that I was a natural born swindler. They went on to say that I used to fudge and swindle and cheat when we was all school boys and played marble for keeps. They said, moreover and beyond all that, that I was a reglar tumblebug politician—always pushin one way and lookin the other. So they went on slanderin and backbitin and vilifyin my character and throwin dirt at the white flower of our distinguished family till the woods was full of campaign lies. But I rounds them all up and nailed them down. That yarn about my raisin the weddin fee weakened me considerable, but I had truth and virtue and nigger luck on my side, and I lows to myself that they would pull me through, snags or no snags. And they did. In politics the man that does the lyin and slanderin and plays the gambler's game is the man that most commonly meets the ceilin and furnishes the dull thud.

It was so with Dink Ashcroft. I got the votes and he got left three to one.

A FAMILY TRAIT.

But I didn't keep anything stacked up against Dink. It has been a standin rule of my life to fight shy of dead men and dead issues and stick close to the things that are livin and breathin.

The first time I saw Dink after the election was over was at the cross roads one Saturday evening. His bristles were up some, but he looks like he was sorry about somethin or other, havin the appearment of a man that would if he could.

"Well, I'm bound to say," Dink goes on to state, "that the Sanders family is hell runnin for office."

"You are preachin the great unwashed truth now, Dink," says I, "and leavin out the cuss words I might add that we are also somethin of that sort on gettin the office."

CHAPTER XIX.

UNCLE BILLY HORNADY IN POLITICS.

The Good Book tells us that "a light heart liveth a long time." Moreover also it pays to look out for the bright side of everything, and never to borrow trouble from somebody else. Borrowin from your neighbors, or the merchants, or the general government, is a mighty risky and uncertain business, but yet if you must borrow somethin or other then pitch in and borrow anything and everything but trouble. You will git enough of that in the long run without gougin it out of other people.

A MIGHTY CAMPAIGNER.

Since I come up to the proudest period in all the life of man—free, white and twenty-one—I have met many campaigners and come through sundry and various lively campaigns. But old man Billy Hornady (Uncle Billy, as we boys always call him) has been the outdoonest campaigner that ever cast a ballot or whipped a fight in forty mile of Rocky Creek.

The main beauty with Uncle Billy was that he never got mad and went crazy and lost his head. He was bound to have a hand in every campaign that the people fought, and I can't now remember of any public meetin where stump speakers measured arms and shelled the woods but what Uncle Billy was there—right up on the front seat in the amen corner, too. He always heard both sides and took in the whole performance, from the main tent to the side shows, but he never would forgit to vote and holler for the straight ticket. He could git more fun out of politics and stir up less trouble with other people than any man I ever run with in all the born days of my life.

The reason of that was that he never got his back up and nobody but a fool could of got ruffled up with him. Everything in politics was funny to Uncle Billy. In every campaign that come along, from the go to the finish, you could always find him in the heat and thick of the fight, with about a pint of corn juice under his shirt and a smile on his face as broad as a barn door. It looks like he never could find anything in politics for men to

git mad and fall out and go to fightin over. If everybody was like him in these regards the country would run along a heap smoother and better than it does in the present time.

HE DIDN'T WANT OFFICE.

Another good pint with Uncle Billy was that he didn't want office. He was always in the ring for the good of the country and the success of the straight ticket, but he never got anything out of the game exceptin the fun of whoopin the boys up for the old flag and gallopin with the gang from Weaver's Woodyard all the way. And as far back as my recollection runs I can't remember a political campaign with two sides to it but what Uncle Billy was right there all the time and every clatter to put in for his share of the fun and general excitement.

I do believe in my soul that Uncle Billy could find more in a political contest to laugh about, and then laugh louder and longer than any man that ever went forth to replenish the earth and subdue it. He could catch more funny pints in a speech than any common ten men. Seems like anything and everything a stump speaker said was funny to him. I remember once when I was runnin with old man Jeems W. Staggers for County Coroner and solemnly announced from the stump that I would not give out any personal opinions of my extinguished opponent because my old daddy had taught me never to speak ill of the dead, Uncle Billy laughed and laughed till he jest had to stop and lay down and wallow in it. I believe, on my word as an honest man and a daylight Democrat, if I was to git up with a face as long as a broom handle and remark that I believed in the Second Comin and he was there, he would break out and laugh all over himself in spite of creation. But the people didn't mind that, and most everybody had a soft spot in their hearts for Uncle Billy. He never picked a fuss or started a fight with other folks because they didn't think his way, and what was still better and more of it, he didn't want office.

A TELLIN SPEECH.

Now, Uncle Billy never did call himself a stump orator, but accordin to reports he did make a speech once upon a time and covered all the ground with it.

It happened, from what the people say, at the time when Henry Clay, the long mill boy of the slashes, was buckin agin Andy Jackson in a race for President. The Rocky Creek folks had went to work and got up a big barbecue dinner and invited public speakin on the issues and candidates of the day. A risin young lawyer come down from the city and made a powerful eloquent and ringin speech in behalf of Henry Clay, but it come to pass somehow that the Jackson speaker didn't turn up. The young lawyer pawed the air and poured out a flood of wit and eloquence that swept the whole crowd into the Clay column, as it were, for a few moments. But several Jackson men saw that it never would do to back down and let the crowd git off without hearin somethin in behalf of Jackson. They tried first one man and then another for a speech and finally settled on Billy Hornady, who was then a youngster not twenty-one. He held to it that he couldn't make a speech, but they told him he must git up and say somethin—anything in orderment to hold the Jackson men in line. A great word with Billy was "goshermighty durn," and after so long a time he got up and spoke as follows, to-wit :

"Fellow citizens. Where was Henry Clay durin the battle of New Orleans? Goshermighty durn ! He was at home warmin the seat of his pants in a soft cushion chair, and playin poker at a dollar an ante, goshermighty durn ! But where was And Jackson durin the battle of New Orleans? goshermighty durn ! Up to his neck in blood and fire and thunder, goshermighty durn !"

That was all he said and that was enough to hold the crowd for Jackson. Rocky Creek went windin by a stavin big majority for Jackson, and I reckon if you was to go over in the old hill country you would find some good old Democrats that are still votin for "Old Hickory."

It would take a powerful mean and low down man to raise a fuss with Uncle Billy, and so far as I know he never did have but one fight, and then he whipped his man quicker than you could say scat.

When Andy Lucas got a few of the boys to take him out and rub him down and comb his mane and plait his tail for the

independent dash agin Blev Scroggins, the regular nominee, Uncle Billy was a Scroggins man. He had been for Lucas all along till Andy went off on the wrong trail and right there they had to part company. As for the men, Uncle Billy thought a heap more of Lucas than he did of Scroggins cause Blev had once swapped the very socks off of him in a horse trade, but still he stood flat-footed on the old Democratic puncheon, and you could not fool him out of the straight and proper way.

Well, when Andy jumped the trail old Lige Runnels was one of the few men that followed off after him, and Lige was one of these reglar fool politicians. He got mad with everybody on the other side in a campaign, and if the fight went agin him he didn't have the grit to stand up and take it like a man.

Now of course the Scroggins men whipped the fight hands down, and Blev went in like a dog in a walk. On the evenin of election day Uncle Billy got powerful full of himself and other vegetable matter, and laughed and hollered for "Scroggins and the party" till he wore himself down and out. About that time Lige Runnels come along, and he was so mad till he couldn't see straight. Presently he picked out Uncle Billy and let in to cussin and roarin and pitchin and tryin to raise a rumpus. The more he cussed the louder Uncle Billy laughed till by-and-by Lige hauled off and hit him one in the pit of the stomach. The lick stunned Uncle Billy for a minit or two, but when he recovered he come back at Lige and went around him and crawled over him and run through him till he was the best whipped man that ever toted a black eye around Rocky Creek. Uncle Billy was slow goin and good humored for common, and the rheumatis had played twistification with one of his legs, but when he got worked up to the fightin pitch it turned out that he was a bad man from Turner's Crossin.

A CAMPAIGN HORSE.

Uncle Billy was not only a great campaigner himself, but he drove the best all-around campaign horse in the county. He called his horse Jake, and wheresoever you found Uncle Billy, Jake was right there also or somewhere close around every clatter. That horse could put as much big road behind him in one

day as any horse in the country, but at the same time he kept cool and quiet, while other horses got skeered and run away and played smash in general.

Uncle Billy could take old Jake, a few plugs of tobacco and a little strong whisky and scrape up more votes than any ten men in the county. Everytime they met a man along the road and Uncle Billy hollered "hurrah for the straight ticket," Jake would slow up and come to a dead stop so as to let his master talk politics. Or he would stand unhitched and still as a mouse by the roadside while Uncle Billy went over in the field to "licker up the boys" and clinch a vote on his side.

But Uncle Billy was not only a great campaigner with a campaign horse that had sense like folks; he also used a special style of campaign whisky. He could take one pint of that "red licker" and it would last him and his friends all day long. It was so infernal hot and strong till the hardest drinkers couldn't do nothin but nibble at it, and a mighty little of it went a powerful long ways.

The last time I saw Uncle Billy, him and Jake was headed for the hill country. The old man was heeled with a bottle of that strong "red licker" and three plugs of tobacco. I ask him where he was bound for and he come back at me and says, says he:

"Burnin the woods and siftin the ashes for Democratic votes, goshermighty durn! The straight ticket is bound to win, Rufe, goshermighty durn! Untie them legs there, Jake, goshermighty durn!"

CHAPTER XX.

A POLITICAL DIFFERENCE WITH SANDY WICKENTON.

After thinkin it all over cool and calm and serious, it does look to me like about the biggest fool thing that a man can do in this world is to be forever and eternally fallin out and fussin and fightin with his neighbors.

Life is powerful short at best, but yet still it is most too long for a man to have the botts and stay mad with anybody all the time. It passeth my general understanding how such things can come to pass, but I have known men—white men at that—to git mad and fall out and fight about their stock or t̄eir land lines, or some triflin little matter, and spend a whole lifetime cussin and hatin one another and plottin and plannin and schemin to git even. I have seen men live in the same settlement, with nothin between them but a cross fence, for twenty or thirty or forty years without so much as speakin, or visitin on Sunday, or swoppin a few friendly lies—the rankest and pizenest enemies, whereas they had ought to of been good neighbors and clost friends. That is what I call tomfoolery and pure cussedness. It is little and mean. Children fuss and fight and then make up and go on weavin the ties of friendship stronger and stronger every day. Even to the niggers, they don't git mad and mean enough to stay mad a whole entire lifetime. And ain't it strange how some grown white men will do and say things that are too everlastin mean and little for children and niggers to do or say?

But then we have to recollect that man, born of woman, is sometimes full of mean whisky and fool notions. I am sorry and ashamed to let the truth out, but I reckon it will have to come. Me and my old friend Sandy Wickenton have been playin the fool with ourselves for about two years, or maybe a little better, and it is hard to tell which one has been the biggest fool of the two. I feel like I have been the biggest and the



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meanest, and Sandy says he feels likewise the same. But at any rates I am glad to say that we have both come back to our senses and made up and quit.

"FIT PLUM THROUGH THE WAR."

Today when I stop and look back and think about it I can't see how it was that me and Sandy Wickenton could both git mad at the same time and stay mad for two long years on a straight stretch. He is considerable older than I am, but we had been neighbors and friends and fellow-citizens of the same settlement from boyhood all the way. And that ain't all. Sandy has got the brightest and bulliest record of any man in forty mile of Rocky Creek. He never was elected sheriff or county judge and has never been sent to the legislature. He want a colonel, nor a captain, nor a corporal in the army. He has been jest simply private Sandy Wickenton all the way through. But I remember as fresh and clear as if it was but yesterday when he come home from the war. He went off to the war mounted and ridin a fine young iron-gray horse that his good old father had raised, but when he come back, he come into the settlement a walkin, and barefooted at that. I had started to town horseback that mornin and way over there in the long sandbed beyond Bear Creek bridge I met Sandy Wickenton. He had his legs untied good and was pullin his freight and blowin and puffin like a steam engine. I reckon he must of got a glimpse of the old home place, or saw the smoke curlin up from the settlement and the sight of such things had put fresh speed and new stayin powers into his lean and hungry and tired body. I didn't know the man until he spoke up and called my name and even then it was all I could do to believe I was talkin face to face with the same Sandy Wickenton that had mounted that iron-gray horse and rode off to the war four years before.

"Well, it is me to a dead certainty, Rufe," says Sandy. "But I must hurry on to the settlement. I can't rest now till I clamp my eyes on the old home onest more."

"Wait a minit, Sandy," says I, "and tell me somethin about yourself and the war. How did you come out?"

"By golly, I come out with a record," says he. "I fit plum through the war, and got my horse drowned in the Tennessee river."

"Didn't you see General Gordon and General Lee and the other big fighters?" says I.

"To be certainly, of course," says Sandy. "I saw General Gordon and General Forest and General Morgan and General Wheeler and General Lee and General Grant, and all the rest of the big fighters. But I ain't makin no brags about that, Rufe. I must stand or fall on my own record, and you know what it is—I fit plum through the war, and got my horse drowned in the Tennessee river."

It was three miles to the settlement, but I didn't have no particlar business in town that day, so I turned back and went home with Sandy. He was in a monstrous hurry to git home and I wanted to hear him tell about the war. So I walked while he rode and we talked together as we went on to the settlement. But Sandy want to say bilin over with war talk. He was talkin mostly about home and askin me a thousand and one questions about the home folks.

"Remember, Rufe, that I am still Private Wickenton," says Sandy when he got home and I told him goodbye. "I was neither killed nor promoted. But if any of the boys ask you how I come out, jest tell them that I fit plum through the war, and got my horse drowned in the Tennessee river."

OLD FRIENDS FALL OUT.

I reckon, no doubts, when I tell you what a little fool thing me and Sandy had our fuss and fallin out about, you will think we have been runnin from bad to worse and more of it. It was all on account of politics. I know that will seem marvelsome strange to the general public, but men are men and fools will be fools.

About two years ago it leaked out and come to my ears that Sandy Wickenton had took the bit in his teeth, as it were, broke out of the Democratic harness and gone over to the Third Party. I didn't believe it. I didn't want to believe it, and I wouldn't believe it. What? You tell me that my old friend Sandy

Wickenton, born and bred and brought up in the plain and simple faith of Democracy, gone over to the Third Party, with all of its ills and evils and side-shows and fly wheels and new-fangled attachments? No sir. It can't be so, gentlemen, it can't be so! There's a man that has made a record. He fit plum through the war, and got his horse drowned in the Tennessee river. Away with the slanderation!

So, bright and early the next mornin after I got the news, I saddled up and lit out for the Wickenton place. I wanted to see Sandy and talk with him, and let him know about the terrible reports that had been put out on him. He was at the house when I rode up to the front gate, and comin out on the porch he told me to light and dismount and come in as kind and pleasant as he could. I hitched and went in, and, after passin compliments in regards to the weather and the health of the family, I went right on to tell him what I had heard and what I had come to see him about.

"Somebody has been puttin out some durned infernal dirty lies on you, Sandy," says I, "and I thought I would ride over and tell you about it. They are tellin it around in the political meetins that you have quit the Democratic party and gone over to the ring streaked and striped flag of the Third Party. When I heard it yesterday I told the crowd that it was a dadblamed, low-downed slanderation, and give it as my opinion that the man that started it was a liar and the truth want in him. I knew some sore-headed grumblers and kickers and fools had quit the Democratic party and run off after the new political jack-o'-lantern, but they couldn't make me believe such a thing about a man with plenty of sense and a noble record—a man that fit plum through the war, and got his horse drowned—"

"Hold up right there, Rufe," says Sandy. "You are goin most too fast now and treadin on techy ground. My politics is one thing and my army record is somethin else. What you have heard concernin of my politics is all exactly so. I have quit the Democratic party for good and all. I have bid farewell to the old parties with their old-fashioned politics and I am now a member of the Third Party in full fellowship. I am now singin that glad new song, 'Goodbye, Old Party, Goodbye.' I may be

a kicker and a fool in politics accordin to your doxology, Rufe, but you don't want to be flinging any dirt at me or my record. It is a fact, as General Lee would tell you today if he was livin, that I fit plum through the war, and got my horse drowned in the Tennessee River."

"I am not up to throwin any dirt or doubts on your army record, Sandy," I went on to say, "but with regards to politics, you are several times too many for me. If the dead had rose up from the graveyard and told me that Sandy Wickenton was goin off with the Third Party I would of give them the durn lie on the spot. Who would of thought it of a man whose father and grandfather and great grandfather belonged to the old school of Democrats and swore by Thomas Jefferson and Daniel Webster and the Constitution—a man that had fit plum through the war and got—

"That's all right, Rufe," says Sandy, "but durn Thomas Jefferson and the Constitution. I am for the people and the Third Party. Not that I am after any political office, but because I think I am on the right trail. Don't give yourself any worriment about my army record. It can stand like I made it and I am willin to sink or perish with it."

I soon saw that it was all vanity to talk politics with Sandy Wickenton. He was a gone fawn skin in regards to politics, and all the salt in creation couldn't save him. But I sorter lost my head about that time and give out my private political opinions in plain old Rocky creek English, without any Bible words to speak of. Sandy come back at me in the same tune. One word called for another till we both got hot in the collar, and if some of the women folks hadn't come in about that time we would of soon been out in the big road fightin like a pair of mangy dogs over a soup bone.

"You can take the blamed old Third Party and go to blue blazes with it," says I, "and henceforth I will believe anything they tell about Sandy Wickenton."

"You go your way and I'll go mine," says Sandy, "but you must remember that Rufus Sanders will have to eat a few more dumplins before he can boss a man that fit plum through the war, and got his horse drowned in the Tennessee river."

ACROSS THE BLOODY CHASM.

And so the game stood for two long years. Sandy went his way, and I went mine. We didn't change neighborly visits and we didn't swap any family lies. I had the mullygrubs and Sandy he had the botts. But at the same time I want so mighty mad with Sandy. I got powerful mad to start with, but somehow it wouldn't last. It stood to reason with me that Sandy had went wild and crazy in his politics and was trainin with the enemies of the people and the state, but I couldn't stay mad with a man that had fit plum through the war, and got his horse drowned in the Tennessee river. So I wrote Sandy a note in-durin of the Christmas and New Year holidays, which the same was as follows :

“ HOME, January 1, 1894.

“ DEAR SANDY—For two years we have been at outs, poutin and sulkin and carryin on like a passle of fools. I am sick and tired of this business. Politics is one thing, but our personal friendship is somethin else. I reckon we talked too much the last time I was at your house. It seems that both of us had a bad case of runnin off at the mouth. But I am ready to take it back and spit on the slate and spile out. I will be over to see you Saturday night, and if it suits you we will shake hands and swap lies and be friends oncst more. There is always room at my house and in my heart for a man that fit plum through the war, and got his horse drowned in the Tennessee river.

“ Yours respectfully,

“ RUFUS SANDERS.”

And Sandy, he replied back to my note as follows, to-wit, below :

HOME, January 2, 1894.

“DEAR RUFUS—You are right about this infernal poutin business. It is all durn foolishness. I am sorry and I know you are. I am your friend and you are mine. Be dead certain to come over and see me Saturday night. You will find the horse-rack at the same place and the latch-string danglin around on the outside. Bring your fiddle with you. I will have some-

thin stronger than water, and there is plenty of sugar and eggs in the pantry.

“ Yours truly,

“ SANDY WICKENTON.”

And so it come to pass that me and my old friend Sandy Wickenton shook hands acrost the bloody chasm and buried the hatchet, blade down. On the last day of the first week in the New Year we agreed to spit on the slate and spile out and start over. We don't talk politics this year. I reckon Sandy still thinks that he is right, and I know blame well that I am right. But men—grown up white men—can differ in politics and still be honest. There are some men in the Third Party that are fools for the want of sense, and natural born rascals for the want of principles. But Sandy Wickenton is a man that has made a record. He pays his debts and loves his neighbors, and more than that, he fit plum through the war, and got his horse drowned in the Tennessee river.

CHAPTER XXI.

AUNT NANCY NEWTON'S PHILOSOPHY.

"Your Aunt Nancy Newton ain't one of the sort to be forever moanin and carryin on about the lost and ruint world," said that good old soul in a runnin family talk the night before she left on her return back home to the Panther creek settlement. "And I don't take no stock in the general talk to the extent that the country is goin right on down to rack and ruination. You can hear a heap of talk about hard times, and there ain't no doubts about the sorry crops and skeerce money, but you wouldn't see much signs of hard times in knockin around among the folks. The country in the old settlement borderin around on Panther creek, as you know, ain't nothin to brag on in regards to rich lands or rich people, but we have seen the time when times was way yonder harder with us than they are now. It don't look to me like people that can ride in top buggies and wear silks and satins and eat biscuits three times a day ought to go around cussin the general government and growlin about hard times. I recollect the time durin the war and after the surrender when people wore homespun and homemade clothes and felt rale big if they could eat biscuits oncst a week. I have smoked the natural and reverent old Red Aleck tobacco many a day and was monstrous glad to git it.

TOO MANY FANCY TRIMMINS.

"As I said before there ain't anything in particlar the matter with the country, and so I reckon from all accounts there must be somethin the matter with the people. There are so many shams and snide shows and so much tomfoolery goin on amongst the people till it is mighty hard to tell who is which and which is who. There is too much high flyin and too everlastin many fancy trimmins. The time is now come when you can't look at the general appearments of people and tell who they are or what they are. I used to know everybody in this country and could tell you who was rich and who was poor and

who was only middlin. But things have changed around so in this day and generation till you can't tell which from tother. You see people puttin on big style and pilin on the finery till you can't rest, and ridin in fine buggies and playin the piannies and all that, whereas if you was goin to be hung or shot you couldn't tell whether they are rich or poor or what not.

" You can't say whether the trimmins was borrowed or bought on a credit or paid for. It is mighty hard for some people to find out that poor folks must have poor ways, or mean ones, and they most in generally has mean ones. Sometimes it seems to me like good common sense is more skeecer than good sound money.

" Understand me now—I ain't got nothin to say agin people puttin on style if it is so they can. Style is a very good thing and all right for them that can afford it and like it, but if there is anything in the world that makes me rale tired and gives me a comin appetite to spit, it is this broke down highristocracy a flyin high colors. If I had plenty of money and no poor kin you wouldn't catch Nancy Newton trampin around over the country with a fly bonnet and this old faded alpaca dress on. If it was so I could put on as much style as I want to and at the same time be honest, I would ride in a carriage and play on the pianny and wear silks and satins till my clothes would whistle like a high wind in a canebrake. But you see I couldn't do that now and be honest, cause I have got mighty little money and a whole passle of poor kin. My notion is that people that can't ride and be honest and natural ought to walk, and them that can't pay for the silks and satins ought to wear check homespun and alpaca. And it don't make so mighty much difference when you figger it out, whether people make a big show or live on a good common level. The poorest people in the world are them that are always wantin somethin that they can't git, and the richest people are them that don't want very much and can git that whenever they want it. If Nancy Newton don't want nothin but a few plain clothes and a little smokin tobacco and can git that, she is a heap sight better off with regards to this world's goods than Mises So-and-So that wears her silks and satins and

plays on the pianny, but wants a diamunt ring so bad till she could taste it and can't git it.

THE RICH AND THE POOR.

"But if you will take notice, Rufus, you will find out that your Aunt Nancy was wobblin around mighty clost to the truth when she told you that it is hard nowadays to tell who is rich and who is poor. People aint satisfied to do the best they can and go on and let well enough alone. Everybody wants to fly a little higher than anybody else. You will see people tryin to keep up with their neighbors and git ahead of the music if they can. A man that aint got but 100 acres and a pair of mules tryin to make as big a show and turn out as much style as another man that's got two or three plantations and twenty head of mules—a one thousand dollar man puttin on high style and playin the ten thousand dollar fool. You will see good old sisters in the church—with plenty of religion but mighty little sense—that will rake and scrape and stint and scratch, and beg and beg and borry and borry, so they can sail off to meetin with as many ribbons and fancy fixments on as the richest woman in the country—singin "Amazin Grace How Sweet the Sound," and tellin the biggest sort of a lie with their clothes. And then you can see some good old brother right up in the amen corner, with his store bought clothes and his fried shirt on singin at the top of his voice, "How Beauteous Are Their Feet Who Stand On Zion's Hill," and keepin time with a gold-headed walkin stick, when at the same time his last year's store account aint been paid and he don't know how the next meal of victuals is comin or where it is comin from. I would ruther be jest plain Nancy Newton, with a few clothes and them paid for, than to go dressed up finer than split silk and feel like a mangy dog with a gold collar on.

"Your old friend and fellow servant Ben Cris Weaver is about the most richest man in the old settlement now, though a stranger goin into that country wouldn't think it from the general signs around. Well, Ben Cris aint got so much money I don't reckon, and in fact I don't know as he has got any. When I say he is rich I only mean that he has got everything

that he needs and don't want anything that he can't git. But then Ben Cris is one of the old-fashion sort. He ain't all the time worryin about what other people do and say, and he ain't skeered to be plain and honest and natural. If you wanted to insult Ben Cris you couldn't pick no better way than to offer to sell him dry goods and groceries on a credit. He don't buy no groceries, scusin a little sugar and flour and coffee, and but precious little in the way of dry goods. He wears homespun clothes and don't put on any style to speak of, and yet they always have plenty to eat and wear over to his house. You don't see no signs of hard times and you don't hear no talk of hard times around there. It wouldn't come to 50 cents one way or the other with Ben Cris if the dry goods stores was closed up and meat was goin at four bits a pound. He is one of these men—and it's a blessed pity the tribe don't increase—that works to make a livin. The trouble with a heap of men is that they sail in to make money and cut a big curf and don't have time to make a livin."

HARD ON THE HIGH FLYERS.

Aunt Nancy put her pipe away in her thanky bag and then went on to say :

" From the way I hear the men folks talkin the hard times are goin to be particlar hard on some of the high flyers. One of them has already hit the ceilin in our settlement and I am lookin for a few more to go up the spout before the pinch is over with. Some three or four years ago a stranger moved down there on Panther creek and sailed in to farmin on a big hook. He didn't have no money, but from the fuss he made and the style he put on you would of thought he had a bank of his own hid out sumers down there in the woods. He farmed on rented land and mortgaged stock and went it on a credit for everything, but there want a livin man in all that country that could make a bigger show than Pete Turner (that was his name, or the one he give out down there). He tried to do everything that any of the neighbors did, only a little bit more of it. If one of the neighbors bought a new wagon Pete would light right out and buy him one and then have it painted solid red. If somebody

got a new dress for his wife Mises Turner she must have two new dresses, with plenty of fine trimmins throed in for good measure. Well, of course, a man couldn't hold up at them licks forever, even if the seasons hit right every time and crops was always good, and this year Mister Turner he waded in so all-fired deep till he couldn't touch bottom with a forty-foot pole. So the storekeeper that had been payin the freight whilst Pete had his fun took charge of the crops way yonder in August, and last week the sheriff come around and nailed up the crib and drove off with the mules. Pete is now out of a job, with nothin to do and nothin to go on. Mister and Mises Turner ain't puttin on so powerful much style this fall, though I reckon they can think about the big things they have done in the past and be happy. But as for me, I would rather be poor folks with poor ways and plain clothes than to be one of those has-beens. It is too much like smellin good cookin a mile off when you are so hongry till you can't see straight.

A FEW PARTING WORDS.

" Well, I reckon a heap of people, if they could hear me talk, would think Nancy Newton is a fool, and your Aunt Nancy could return her double-breasted compliments in the same sort of coin. They started in to hold a big protracted meetin down at old Snake Hill church not long ago, and after three days they busted up and quit and give it out that it was all on account of the hard times. One young lady—I think she was a Miss Blevins—wanted to jine the church, but after givin in her experience she lowed times was too hard and she couldn't jine till she could git a new dress to be baptized in. That sounds monstrous curious to me for church-doins. When I got religion I would of jined right then and there if I hadn't had a thread of clothes to my back and then took the chances as to the babsouzin.

" Then old Deacon Willford he refused pint blank to git happy and do his share of the shoutin, cause times was so hard and he did not have a new red bandana handkerchief to wipe his weepin eyes with. The preacher he only made a bad mess worse by preachin more politics than religion, fussin at the towns and the town people and chargin the general government

with all the hard times and tribulations that the human race is heir to ; and that makes me think. Didn't you all hear tell of how the church people over at Pine Top church got mad with their preacher and turned him off ? Land above, I thought everybody had got that news before now. Well, you see that church was planted there right in the thick of a Third Party nest, and the members have been raisin a whole lot of sand with the government here of late. Old Parson Leatherwood has been preachin over there, and of all the preachers in the country, there aint narry one more firmer in the faith and sounder in the doctrines than him. So along in the summer some of the red-headed politicianers of the church got up a committee and went to the parson and told him he must manage somehow so as to fling a few politics into his sermons and let his people know that he was with them in the spirit as well as in the flesh. The old parson sorter got his dander up then and give it out that he had "come to preach Jesus Christ and him crucified," and not to be dabblin in politics. He was after savin lost souls and was willin to let other men save the country. So long as he preached the gospel truth to the congregation it was none of their business what sort of politics he had, or whether he had any at all. By the next preachin day they had turned the old man off and hired another preacher. But today, if you was to take Pine Top church and all the people in it and bile them down to soap grease you wouldn't find as much genuine religion as old Parson Leatherwood has got in one big toe."

Finally, my hearers, I am sorry to tell you that Aunt Nancy Newton has packed her wallet and returned back home. But I hope that it will be given unto her to live and smoke and talk for many days yet to come, and if she lives a hundred years I hope she never will forget the way to our house.

CHAPTER XXII.

ANDY LUCAS AND HIS MULE DOLLIE.

You have noticed already I reckon no doubt that old Mart Mayo, the natural born liar, is always flingin dirt at Andy Lucas, the great horse trader. To a man up a tree or on the outside that may look a little bit queer, but when a man that knows the men and the facts in the case as good as I do, the whole thing is as plain as a whitewashed fence around a country graveyard. Old Mart has been at outs with Andy for many years, and Andy aint givin a damaged postage stamp one way or the other. They always speak when they meet up together and pass in callin, but at the same time there aint no tender ties as anybody knows of between old Mart Mayo and Andy Lucas.

HOW THE HUFF STARTED.

In orderment for you to understand right exactly how and why old Mart got on a big huff with Andy, I will have to tell about a famous horse race over at the Cross Roads, wherein Andy won the pile with a mule. It was then along in the Christmas times, and horse racin had been all the go for some days with the boys. The fastest horses, the best races and the bets had been helt back for Saturday, the last day of the racin week, and a stavin crowd was on hand to see the favorites go.

Now Andy Lucas aint no slouch till yet when it comes to handlin horse flesh, and in them days he was in his prime. But it so happened by some hook or mercrook that he hadn't been takin any hand in the races that week, and he didn't pull a card nor make a pass till that Saturday evening. It was gettin along considerable into the shank of the evenin and the boys was warmin up the horses for the last race when Andy Lucas came by drivin a six-mule team. He had been to town, it seems like, to open his store account and lay in provisions for another year and was then on his return back home. You could see at a glance with the naked eye that Andy had been nibblin at the jug most too frequent, and we could hear him a mile and a half

down the road singin and cussin and carryin on with his mules. When he come up he was reelin and rockin in his saddle, ridin all over the stay mule and talkin all sorts of fool talk at the top of his voice. Some of the boys went out and headed the team and brought Andy and his turnout down to a dead stop. Then they let into pickin and tewin at Andy about this, that and the other jest to see how bad he was muddled and mixed up with himself. But he always come back with as good as they sent, and after naggin at him a few times they had to give it up and quit. Presently Andy's jug went the rounds, and the boys told him he must git down and take out and stay and see the big race, but he told them no and give it out that he had better be drivin along towards home.

"Life is too short and money is too skeerce and time too fleetin for me to be foolin along here with your piney woods colts and scrub races," says Andy, as he tightened the line on his lead mule and uncoiled his whip from around the horn of his saddle. But the boys headed his team off once more and told him he couldn't jump the game in that way.

THE LEAD MULE ENTERED.

"You fellows think you are playin a whole lot of thunder bettin off your money and runnin horse races with piney woods colts," says Andy. "If my lead mule out there—we call her Dollie at home—couldn't beat anything on the grounds in a runnin race, I would pull off her shoes and turn her out for buzzard bait."

"You are blowin too much through your mouth this evenin, Andy," put in old Mart Mayo. "It is true that whisky talks sometimes, but it takes money to tell the tale."

"I can see where you are about three-thirds right, Mr. Mayo," Andy come back at him, "and I have got \$300 right here in the left-hand pocket of these same old jeans breeches that talks and says that my lead mule, Dollie, can run by the fastest horse on the grounds and put the dirt in his face. How much waddin have you fellers put up on the race?"

"Takin all the bets together there is now a leetle over \$300 at the stake," says old Mart.

"Well, now, just in orderment to see whose money talks the plainest and the loudest," says Andy, "I will bet the whole crowd \$300 agin your pile that my lead mule, Dollie, can beat every horse on the grounds in a runnin race," and with that he went down in his pocket and come out with the money in his hand.

Seein how Andy was in dead earnest or either workin off a big bluff, the crowd got together and held a little meetin with regards to what they would do. Old Mart wanted all hands to lump their bets and place it on the field agin Andy's mule, and then divy all around with the winnins. It would be like pickin up that much in the big road, but it would teach Andy Lucas a lesson and break him from drinkin like a fish and shootin off his mouth so big and frequent like. One of the boys thought it might be clost kin to robbery to win money on a bet like that, cause Andy was drunker than seventeen fools already and gettin drunker and drunker with every breath. But the general crowd was in favor of takin the bet accordin to Andy's banter. It would learn him a little sense, and if anybody got particlar sorry about it they could give their share of the winnins back to Andy after he got sober. So they took the bet and told Andy to come forth with his mule. No sooner said than done, and Andy pulled the gear off of Dollie, led her out before the judges, paid 50 cents as entrance fee and had her entered for the race.

BRING FORTH THE MULE.

In the general bettin fever and high confusionment all of the boys and even old Mart didn't take notice that Andy's lead mule, Dollie, was a real rank stranger in the settlement. But whensomever you take your shotgun and start out to shoot Andy Lucas for a fool, you will soon find out that you have got the wrong sow by the ear. Now, Andy had went to town that day and swapped around a few times and at last traded a big two hundred dollar mule to a circus man for the one he called Dollie and worked in the lead. It leaked out after that that Dollie had been trained up for the horse-racin business in particlar and had won piles of money on the track before Andy Lucas ever pulled a line over her back. She was only about middle as to size,

CHAPTER XXIII.

AUNT NANCY ON "WOMEN VOTIN."

"From all I can see and hear in passin back and forth it looks like there is a right smart stir and confusionment goin on about 'women votin,'" says Aunt Nancy Newton one night after supper, as she knocked the ashes out of her pipe and laid it up on the window sill. "The votin fever aint broke out as yet amongst the female generation in the Panther creek country, but if it keeps on spreadin at the present lick, I reckon we will feel a touch of it by-an-by. As for me, I can't exactly say as I would love to vote, but if they was to go ahead and fix up the machinery so as I would have to vote, I'll lay I wouldn't make as big a mess of it as some of the men folks I know.

WOMEN WHO OUGHT TO VOTE.

"The more I think about that votin business the worse I git myself all muddled and mixed up with it," the dear, delightful old soul went on, and there was a look of great botheration on her face. "Now it looks to me like a woman that is free, white and full grown ought to do anything in reason that she wants to do. But I don't believe that the common run of women in this country ought to vote jest simply because I know they don't want to vote. From the way I look at the thing, this country has got as many voters as she needs right now, if not a few more. Whereas, it seems to me like as women commence to vote men ought to quit. Naturally of course there ought to be at any rates one voter in every family, and if you could but only manage so as to make the voter a man or a woman, owin to the general circumference of the surroundins my notion is you would be wobblin around powerful clost to the bull's eye."

"Now there is the Strickland family. It would be plum right and proper for Dunk's wife to do the votin for the concern. For why? Jest simply because she is the mainest man in the family to start with. Dunk, you understand, never was very many at anything. He didn't quit drinkin whisky till Mises

Strickland broke him, which I reckon you remember how she weaned him off from the bottle. She tried everything else till she saw it want no use, and then finally at last she went in kersnooks with him. When Dunk went to town she went with him. If Dunk nibbled at the bottle she would nibble too. When Dunk got drunk she got drunk with him, and if Dunk got mad and flew up and cussed out creation she would git mad and fly up and follow suit. When they got home if Dunk broke the dishes she took the chop-axe and cut down the young orchard, and there they had it up and down and over and under till it was a plum scandalation on the settlement. But she stuck to him and stayed with him and went all the gaits that he could go, till by-and-by he got sick and tired and took out and quit. It went mighty hard with Mises Strickland, but she had went in proposely to wean Dunk, and when she weaned him she weaned him right.

"It is true Dunk Strickland don't drink whisky now—cause he dassent do it—but yet still he aint worth his room in the future hereafter. He is too mortal lazy to eat enough when he is hongry, and the whole kit and bilin of them would of been in the poorhouse before now if he didn't have such a monstrous peart and stirrin woman for a wife. As it is, she tends to the business and runs the machinery for the concern, and she ought to do the votin, too, if she wants to. I can't say that it would suit her to vote, but I do say in case it would she ought to have her way about it.

LET THE BEST MAN VOTE.

"And then there is Toney Ashcraft, which married Mary Ann Stringer—I think it would be nothin but right and proper for the woman to do the votin for that concern. You are bound to remember Mary Ann cause you went to school with her over at the Cross Roads, and she was a bustin big gal then—big enough to knock a cow down and then git up. Well, she has been growin reglar and constant all the time, whilst Toney, as you know, never was much bigger than a minnit, and if he keeps on swinkin, I reckon he will dry up and blow away some of these days. Mary Ann could pick him up by the nap of his.

neck and the seat of his breeches and throw him over the garden palins, or take him down and spank him like he was a baby. And you wouldn't have to lay around in the settlement very long in orderment to find out that Mary Ann is general boss over at the Ashcraft place. All she has got to do is to make a cross mark and spit in it, and Toney he comes to taw. He dassent do anything else.

"Mind you now, I aint tryin to throw no blame on to Mary Ann. Toney aint fitten for nothin in the green world but to loafer around the house and chop a little wood and tote water and rope off the calves and string beans, and the like of that. If Mary Ann didn't furnish the music as well as the brains the whole concern would soon go down to rack and poverty and ruination. It is nothing but natural and right for Mary Ann to take the lead and be the boss. It has so come to pass that she is jest naturally the best man on the place and you can't blame her for that. Neither could you blame her if she was to pitch in and do the votin for the family, and I would ruther like to see the thing fixed up so she could likewise also tend to that branch of the business.

"SHE AINT GONE NOWHERE."

"It raley seems to me like anybody that knows the Widder Bartley will have to own up to it that there is one woman which ought to vote. Now, the widder, you understand, she ain't a widder in weeds by a whole lot. It didn't take death and the graveyard to make out a case of divorcement between her and Steven Bartley. She jest simply got to be about three times too many for poor Steven, and so finally at last he picked up a few duds and moved his washin off somewheres out West. Since that time the widder has been runnin the place accordin to the way it suits her best. And the men folks of the settlement have all now give it up that she is a stavin good farmer, too. She don't plow and she don't split rails, but she does most anything else that comes to hand ; and I reckon she could do that in case of a pushency. She can drive a pair of mules or ride a horse with the best man in the country. She uses a side-saddle like other women, but I have my doubts if she would do that only

Steven bought the saddle for her before he had to change his base. As I was comin up here the other day I met the widder over there in Murder creek swamp on her return back from the flat woods where she had been lookin after some stray cattle. She was ridin of a big ball-faced sorrel horse, with a whip in one hand and a spur on one foot, and she had that old horse movin along at a two-forty lick.

"The men folks tell me, which I reckon they ought to know, that the widder can now hold her hand with the best of them when it comes to cussin and drinkin whisky. No longer than yistiddy Andy Lucas told me of how he met the widder along the big road the last time she went to town and she pulled a pint bottle on him as natural as you or Blev Scroggins could of done it. So I am plum willin to leave it with you, Rufus, if the widder aint fitten to be a voter. Whensomever it comes to that pass where a woman has got to do the farmin and the cussin and the drinkin for the family it seems to me like she mought as well go on and do the votin.

"And what is more the widder would love to vote. I know she would cause I have heard her say if she was only a man she could beat the livin socks off of Gus Crittenden any day in a race for Congress. It is a pity that the widder want a man to start with. I maybe mought be wrong, but it is my own private notion that the good Lord meant to make a man out of her when He mixed up the materials, but owin to a slippunce in the makin she come forth in the general shape of a woman.

"But whilst I hold to the opinions that some women ought to vote, understand it aint because I think the country needs them in her politics, but because it would look natural and right. My notion is, that if the men folks can't save the country—which I sometimes doubt right serious—then she is a gone goslin anyhow."

And where is my Aunt Nancy Newton to-day? She aint gone nowhere.

CHAPTER XXIV.

FAMILY RECORDS, PEDIGREES AND TOMBSTONES.

As for me, I believe in good blood and I like fine stock, both in regards to people as well as cattle and horses. And yet still at the same time I reckon your humble fellow servant don't run as deep on registers and pedigrees and family records as some people you have met up with or heard tell of. If I see a horse that is built from the ground up and built right, with a short fine coat of hair, clean legs, full forehead and ears that taper and taper the right way, I am plum willin to take him in a trade and ask no questions and run all the risk, register or no register, pedigree or no pedigree. And then on the other hand, if the horse has got a dish face—which the same means that he is a fool for the want of sense—if he shows the white of his eyes and wears fetlocks a foot long, there aint no room in my lot, nor corn in the troft, nor fodder in the rack for him, and I wouldn't give a durn for his register and his records. He might be registered way up to the top notch and have a pedigree as long as your arm, but I will bet my Sunday boots that he is a natural born, all-round scoundrel and will kick or buck or fly the track in a pair of minits.

SCORE ONE FOR TEXAS.

And right along that line I will have to score one to the credit of the great state and the good people of Texas. They don't run so very infernal deep on registers and pedigrees. They take a horse, or a man, by the way his hair stands, and size him up and fix a price on him accordin to the way he carries himself and the general material that was used in his makin. If the horse, or the man, is triflin or sorry stock himself, his family papers, pedigrees, registers and records jest simply aint worth a fiddler's durn in Texas. In that country every horse and every man must stand on his own pegs, and if the underpinnin aint tolerable good it is only a question of time as to when there will be a great fall, my countrymen. If I was

you and didn't have merit and manhood enough to swim without gourds and cover all the ground I trod on, I believe I would rather not back my ox cart into Texas. You will find out, when you git there, that the people don't give a durn whether your grandfather was a president or a governor, a county judge, a justice of the peace, or jest a plain American citizen, and they won't stop you in the big road to ask whether your father was a general, or a colonel, or a major, or a captain, or a high private in the rear ranks. In fact it don't make so awful doggone much difference with them whether you ever had a grandfather or not, and they don't ask no questions in particlar with regards to what your name was before you went to Texas.

So if ever you take a notion to go and try your luck in the great and growin West you needn't to give yourself any particular worriment about your family records. You will have to spit in your hands and light in and make your record as best you can, and then stand up or go down with it. You won't have to take any papers of compellment to prove up the record and show how one of your four fathers fit, bled and died with George Washington at Bunker's Hill. And you might as well to leave them fine letters that your grandfather got from Andy Jackson at the time when he was general of the army and president of the United States of America. George Washington was a marvelsome sort of a boy, and couldn't tell a lie if he wanted to, and Old Hickory was a natural-born fighter and a statesman from long taw; but you must keep it in your remembrance, young man, that they are both dead now, and more than probable they will have to stay dead a right smart whet.

Whensomever a new horse rounds himself up in Texas they spot him and brand him, without any particular regards to his records and pedigree, and then wait to see what he will come to. And when it comes down to these little family matters, a man aint no better than a horse in that great country. If you can stand up under your end of the stick and weed your own row they will bet on you and back you, and stand by you and help you over the roughest places, but if you can't stand alone and keep all of your feet under you and come forth like a strong man

to run a race, it wouldn't pay you to go west to grow up with the country.

THE ROCKY CREEK STYLE.

That is what makes me say what I do about Texas, and that is the reason why I like the great and growin West better than any strip of country under the sun, exceptin dear old Rocky creek. I have never as yet seen the day when a man couldn't come down into the Rocky creek settlement and wade in and win somethin if he played a straight game and had anything to win on. But it is the same thing whether you drive your pegs down in Texas or in Rocky creek—if a man thinks he can come into the game "with narry pair and win the pot" he is powerful apt to back his fool self up agin a thunderin big snag before he quits. It is true that there are some few people about in spots, around here as well as in Texas, that want to keep books on every stranger that comes along and squeeze him out of the game if he can't show down with a good pedigree and a fine family record. And sometimes I think, with fear and tremblin, as it were, that the time is comin when every man that aint registered up to the last notch will have to go foot and spile out and start over and spell up. But down to this blessed day and up to this present writin we simply measure a man in his own bushel or by the yardstick he brings along with him.

I haven't been livin and movin and havin my washin done around Rocky creek these many years for nothin, and comin along over the road I have took notice of some terrible funny things that come to pass in my day and generation. I recollect onct upon a time a youngster rounded himself up in our settlement as quiet and sudden like as if he had fell down from above or scratched through from below. The neighbors didn't know who he was, nor what he was, nor where he come from. He give his name out as John Wesley Williams, but more than that he didn't give out. When somebody ask him whose son he was he says he was the son of old Mises Williams, or words to that extent. Now old man Josiah Crittenden and his family was all powerful and pestered because the young man Williams didn't show up with no fine family records, but the rest of the

neighbors didn't fret any over what was nothin to them and none of their business.

It want so very long before the strange youngster turned up at the Cross Roads one Saturday evenin and mixed and mingled around amongst us till he got to be one of the crowd. And after takin a good look at him, np one side and down the other, I told the boys that we might as well to let him stay on the range till he turned some dirty trick and we caught him at it. He was close built and well made and had a dead game blue eye in his head, and it stood to reason with me that he wouldn't move out till he got ready to go unless he went on his back and feet foremost. Then the next time I met old Josiah Crittenden I up and told him not to go and worry himself down about the young stranger.

"But you must remember, Rufe, that the Crittendens have come down from old Virginia stock," says Josiah, "and it don't set very well with me for a youngster like that to come in and make himself so durned familiar and at home with the good people of Rocky creek. By gad, sir, I love to see a man that's got some sort of a family record and ain't ashamed to show it."

"I am with you, Josiah, tooth and toe-nail when it comes to blood," says I, "but I don't run so infernal deep on the family records. I don't know what sort of folks the strange youngster has got. I don't know whether he has got any folks at all, or ever had any, and it don't make a blame bit of difference with me about that. For all I know some old speckled hen might of laid the egg and the sun hatched him out. But I do know some things about him that I found out at the first glance. He has got some fine blood and good material in him. He ain't headed for the poorhouse nor the chain-gang. He ain't goin to take anything that don't belong to him and it would take a small army with banners and bayonets to run him out of these woods so long as he wants to stay."

So we put the young man Williams in the Rocky creek brand and turned him out on the range to make his own records.

BAD BLOOD IN A FRAUD.

It likewise also came to pass durin the next summer that another strange youngster landed in the settlement, but he come down with a great flurry and brought his pedigree along with him. His name, accordin to the way in which he give it out, was John William Albert Pettibone, and the family records and papers that he brought with him went on to show that he was a full-blood nephew to Gen. Albert Sidney Johnston, whilst his father was a major-general in the army, and both of his grand-fathers had fell at King's Mountain, or somewhere around there in that neighborhood. I reckon from all that I could learn that they must have got their necks broke, or got killed off in some way when they fell, and I have always felt ruther sorry that John William Albert wan't also at the fall. But old Josiah Crittenden he was plum carrried away with the nephew of Albert Sidney Johnston. John William Albert, to let him tell it, had left the city and run down into the backwoods to take a "breathin spell," and rest up for a few weeks durin the summer. And he hadn't been in the settlement more than three days before he was makin his home over at old Josiah Crittenden's house, with his board and washin throwed in for nothin. One day it so happened that I was passin along that way and Josiah come a-bulgin out to the front gate and hailed me and wanted me to git down and go in and set a while. I was in a monstrous hurry to go on home, but the old man wouldn't hear to it that way.

"I have got a young man stoppin with us here at my house that I want you to meet," says Josiah, talkin big and excited like. "He is a full-blood nephew of Gen. Albert Sidney Johnston and comes from one of the first and foremost families of America. He is a thoroughbred, by gad, sir, and none of your scrub stock by a durn sight."

Well, to please Josiah more than anything else, I lit and went in and met the so-called distinguished nephew of the great and only Albert Sidney Johnston, and when I started off home Josiah followed me out to the horserack and wanted to know what I thought of him. So I sailed in, I did, right then and

there, and give in my opinions straight. I talked with Josiah like a friend and a brother till he flew up and got mad, and I come blame nigh roundin myself up into a general family fight.

"That young fellow may be a full-blood nephew, or a twin brother to Gen. Albert Sidney Johnston for what I know, and his family records may run clean back to the Pilgrim fathers," says I, "but at the same time he is one of two things, and may-be both—either a natural born fool or the durndest scoundrel unhung. The good Lord don't make any mistakes in the reglar order of his business, Josiah, and he never put a face like that on a real straight, honest man. Mr. John William Albert Sidney Johnston Pettibone may be good lookin and wear good clothes and use cinnamon drops on his hair, but he shows the white of his eyes too much and don't look you full in the face. He may wear blue stockins—silk ones at that—and calfskin boots in the bargain, but his ears don't slope the right way and the fetlocks are there on his feet jest the same. He is full of his tricks, Josiah. He will buck at the drop of your hat, and if you take my advice you will sleep with one eye open and tote your own keys whilst he stays around the place."

You wouldn't think it, I reckon, but it was six months after that before Josiah Crittenden would speak to me when we met in the big road. But all I had to do was to lay low and keep cool and wait till nature could take her course.

THE GENERAL RESULTS.

Everything went on smooth and easy, and presently it leaked out that the would-be nephew of Gen. Albert Sidney Johnston was settin up to Bessie Ann Crittenden, the baby daughter of old Josiah, powerful clost and constant. But then about the next news that come was to the extent that the only stranger around Rocky creek was a youngster by the name of Williams—John Wesley Williams. The alleged nephew of Gen. Albert Sidney Johnston had borrowed \$50 from Josiah Crittenden, the personal friend of his distinguished father, and then hit the grit and hit it a movin. And till this day, if you are spilin for a fight and want accommodations, jest go over to the Crittenden place and ask old Josiah if there is any family con-

nections between the Crittendens and the late and lamented Albert Sidney Johnston. But the time has now come when Josiah will speak to me every time we meet.

What went with the Crittenden gal? By gum, John Wesley Williams got her with the old Crittenden plantation throwed in for boot, and if it ever happens so that you might pass by that way stop and stay all day or spend the night with him and his folks. They won't pull the family register on you nor ask you any fool questions in regard to your pedigree, but they will give you plenty of something good to eat and a feather bed to sleep on and your horse will git the very best that's in the barn.

CHAPTER XXV.

CHRISTMAS IN THE GOOD OLD WAY.

Way along in the dead hours of the night—Saturday night before Christmas—I woke up with what some people mought call a blame fool notion in my head. I wish I was a boy again, and livin back down there in the old Panther creek settlement, and keepin company with the old gang of boys and girls. I could shut my eyes and stop my ears and see the old home place onest more. I could see the smoke curlin up and the pigeons swoopin down. I could hear the boys whistlin and the girls and the fiddles screakin—Christmas music everywhere. I could see my Aunt Nancy Newton hustlin and stirrin around in the kitchen, and smell the good things cookin for the Christmas dinner. It all come back to me natural like and plain as a white washed fence around a country graveyard—Christmas as it used to be down in the old settlement—and naturally of course I wish it was so I could make a cross mark and spit in it, and turn around and go back and be a boy onest more for two or three days anyhow.

CHRISTMAS AND THE YOUNG FOLKS.

Bless the Lord for Christmas and for Santy Claus! Sometimes I think to myself if Christmas didn't come reglar onest a year, and if it want for the music and merriment and fun and frolicin that the boys and girls carry on amongst themselves in-durin of the holidays, this old world would soon swivel and swink up and die out with the dry rots. The mainest trouble with me is that Christmas don't come but onest a year, and yet it comes so everlastin swift and quick. I can remember when it did look to me like Christmas never would come, but when it did come it brought more happy times and good things to eat in one year than it brings now in ten.

"What ails you, and what has got into you here of late, you blamed old blunderbuss?" says I to myself after thinkin along them general lines for some time. "You aint old to hurt.

You can eat like a pig and sleep like a baby and turn off as much work as any man in the settlement. What's the use to git old before your time, and take the mullygrubs and mope and poke till you dry up and blow away? What's the matter with bein a boy again if you want to?"

To be plum fair and square and honest with you, fellow-citizens, there is one thing at least that I don't like about the present day and generation of American people. They live too infernal fast and git old too blame soon. I can show you men that ought to be in the first prime and full bloom of young manhood, but instid of that they are hump-shouldered and gray-headed and wrinkly-faced and played out and broke down. They don't know what it is to take a day off for huntin and fishin, and Christmas never does come at their house. What are they drivin at? They are out for the stuff, to hear them tell it. They are forever and eternally slavin and scratchin and stintin and starvin and savin and frettin and worryin and hurryin to their graves. They are after money. What will they do with it when they git it? Pile it up and leave it here for somebody else to blow in. Right now I will bet the best mule on the place that I have got more solid comforts out of this vain and fleetin life than the richest man in America. For why? Well, I can wear as many clothes as anybody. They may be more plainer and cheaper, but at the same time I wear clothes and most generally go clean and comfortable. And then I can eat two or three times as much as one of these young old men that's forever busy and broke down. I can eat more different kinds of victuals and never miss a lick of sleep nor send for the doctor. I generally git hongry about three times a day and then I can eat most anything so it is clean and cooked done, and everything that comes on the table smells good and tastes good to me. And if a man don't eat and wear clothes he ain't got no particular business livin in this world.

I have seen some people that look as if they thought it was a plum sin and disgrace for a grown up man or woman to stay young and fresh and natural and human and have the best time they can. But so far as my recollection runs there aint nothin in the Scriptures to make a man git old and feeble before his

time. There aint nothin in religion to make people sad and sour and sorry and solemncholy continually all the time. Or at any rates, if there is, I aint got no religion, and what is more, I don't particlar need any. If you live on and on for ten thousand years you will never hear tell of Rufus Sanders pokin up to Heaven with his face pulled out as long as your arm and lookin like the big end of a funeral procession.

SO LET IT BE.

So after thinkin it all over I come to the conclusion that there want nothin in the Scriptures and nothin in the law books to keep a man from feelin young and fresh and makin out like he was a boy if he wanted to. And it come to pass when I woke up the next mornin my mind was made up to play the game that way.

"I will spend one more Christmas in the old Panther creek settlement and spend it in the good old ways if it kills me," says I to mother in layin off my general plans and specifications. "We will put up for a few days at the old Newton place, and you and Aunt Nancy will have to run the kitchen and look after the table fixments. As for me, I will take pot luck and run my chances with the rest of the boys and girls. Andy Lucas and Blev Scroggins must go too, and by gatlines when we three slip the bridles and turn ourselves loose it will be Christmas onest more down in the old settlement, and Christmas right."

That was Sunday before Christmas, mind you, and bright and early Monday mornin we packed up and lit out for the Panther creek country. I had went over to see Blev and Andy Sunday evenin, and whilst they couldn't shape their work up so as to leave home Monday, they both promised if they lived and didn't die and the Lord spared 'em they would round up in the old settlement by dinner time on Christmas day. Now there aint no ifs nor ands nor whys nor wherefores in the case when you make arrangments with Blev Scroggins and Andy Lucas. It is like dealin in spots when you name the time and place with them boys. If the hamestring holds and the traces don't break and the breechin don't fly up they'll be there.

When we drove up to the Newton place about dinner time

on Christmas Eve Aunt Nancy was as busy as forty thousand bees in one tar bucket. The men folks had killed hogs that mornin and she was at work up to her elbows fixin the sausage meat and souse and chitlens, and so forth and so on. But the dear, delightful old sould said she lowed we would be comin down to the settlement bein as we hadn't sent her no invite to take Christmas with us. I didn't do anything in particular that evening but lay about the house and loafer around the kitchen and eat the scraps and trimmins, whilst mother and Aunt Nancy tended to the cookin.

That night I borrowed one of mother's stockings—the blamdest biggest one I could find—and hung it up in the jam of the chimney and went to bed soon so old Santa Claus wouldn't be skeered to call by in passin. After I had went to bed Aunt Nancy come into the room and put an extry quilt on the bed, and tucked the cover around me snug and nice like she use to way back yonder, when I was a yearlin boy and she was my mainest friend amongst the women folks.

Well, to be certainly of course old Santa Claus come that night, and what do you reckon he brought me? One pair of home-knit wool gloves and two pairs of socks of the same stuff and makin, one plug of fine tobacco, one new pipe, one orange, one apple, sixteen ginger cakes and a fresh stuffed sausage three feet long. I notice one thing in particular about old Santa Claus—he has still got a powerful smart and pecurious way of finding out mighty well what a fellow would love to git in his stockin. If somebody don't tell him he must be monstrous bright at guessin. I beat the whole shootin match up next mornin and caught everybody on the place Christmas gift before they knowed it. But it didn't take Aunt Nancy long to recover and respond, and whilst breakfast was cookin she was fixin up the family eggnog.

You see Andy Lucas and Blev Scroggins had both sent down a bottle of somethin that everybody needs when they go to make eggnog. Andy said it was "white ink," and Blev called it "sperits of cats-a-fightin," but it was all the same to me and Aunt Nancy and the rest of the folks Christmas mornin.

"Christmas wouldn't be Christmas at the Newton place without a little fresh meat and eggnog," says Aunt Nancy as she mixed the sugar and eggs with the other vegetable matter. "But if it want for you, Rufus, and them harum-scarum side partners of yourn, I reckon the eggnog would of been nussin this load of poles. I had plenty of eggs saved up but narry drap of nog, and we are runnin powerful light on these little necessities whilst the price of cotton stays down to rock bottom."

TAKIN CHRISTMAS WITH THE BOYS.

Blev and Andy come up that day in plenty time to take out and feed, and then henceforwards for three days we slipped the bridles and took Christmas in the good old way.

Late in the evenin we got the news that a big candy pullin would come off that night over at the Weatherford place, so after supper we saddled up and lit out. There was a big crowd on hand when we got there, but we put our names in the pot and it want long then before we had worked up the all-fireddest mixtry of girls and boys and candy and music and fiddlin and dancin you ever heard tell of. I don't know how it is in the country around where you live, but down in the Panther creek settlement it takes two or three fiddlers and a whole passle of music to carry on a candy pullin in right and proper shape. It always did and I reckon it always will.

The next day there was a big weddin match about ten miles up the creek at old Ebenezer church. John Henry Crossland married one of the Crossland girls, and after the weddin was over with they give a big infare dinner at the Crossland place. Everybody was invited, and of course that took in me and Andy and Blev along with the rest of the boys and girls. They wound up the weddin frolic that night with a good old-fashioned ~~break~~ down dance, and I think I must of cut the pigeon wing around mighty nigh every girl on the floor before I got enough and quit. You will likewise also take notice that it takes some fiddle music to round off a weddin match down in the Panther creek settlement.

The next day there was some scrub horse racin on the old track over at the Cross Roads, but me and Blev and Andy

couldn't put our hands in that game any to speak of. Andy has worked up such a wide and terrible reputation for ridin fast horses and landin his money so reglar and constant till the Panther creek boys wouldn't bite, no matter how we fixed the bait. So when we saw how the game was runnin we proffered to enter Andy's horse in a race and back him agin the field at the rates of three to one. But still the boys was all skeered to cut the pot and we backed the whole gang down on a dead cold bluff. The sun want more than an hour high when we left the race-track, but when the moon come out it found us possum huntin with the Strickland boys way up in the forks of the creek.

The next day we bruised around the settlement promiscus, and Andy swapped horses four times before dinner, and that night we wound up our Christmas with a big family dance at the Newton place.

THAT GRAND WINDUP.

Late in the evenin me and Blev and Andy and the rest of the boys took and split up a good chance of fat pine and built three roarin big fires out in the front yard.

"If you boys want to git up a dance here it is perfectly all right with me," says Aunt Nancy when she saw what we was drivin at. "You don't have to work up no weddin match in orderment to dance here, and you needn't to put it out that we are goin to have a candy pullin, and then run it into a dance. No sailin under false colors around Nancy Newton's, if you please. Git your fiddlers and sweep the floor and choose your partners and pitch in and dance."

But anyhow, in the hopes of keepin Aunt Nancy out of a church rucus, we took good pains to make that dance a strictly family affair. Everybody there that night was kin folks to Aunt Nancy, and we had a plenty for two full sets and some to spare. The Rutherfords and the Simpkinses, the Stricklands and the Wigginses, the Tomlinsons and the Traverses, and the Crittendens and the Pickenses, and a whole passle more of Aunt Nancy's kinnery—they was all there. When everybody was ready for the music to set in and the dancin to go on Aunt Nancy she came forth, and after givin it out that she couldn't take no stock in the dance owin to a powerful painful and pesterin hitch in

her left knee, she lowed she would have to tell us what the old plantation nigger said oncst upon a time in openin up a Christmas dance, and then she would pass off the time as best she could smokin and talkin around the edges. That touchin Christmas prayer, as the old nigger prayed it and as Aunt Nancy give it to us that night was as follows, towit, below :

THE OLD MAN'S CHRISTMAS PRAYER.

Oh Marster, let dis gatherin be a blessin in yore sight ;
Doant judge us hard for what we does—you know it's Christmas night.
An' all de balance of de yeah we does as right's we kin—
Ef dancin's wrong—Oh Marster, let de time excuse de sin.

We labors in de vinya'd—workin hard an' workin true—
Now shorely you won't notus ef we eats a grape er two,
An' takes a leettle holiday—a leettle restin spell,
Bekase next week we'll start in fresh an' labor twice as well.

Remember Marster—mind dis now—de sinfulness of sin
Is pendin pon de sperit what we goes an' does it in ;
An' in a righchis frame of mind we's gwine to dance an' sing
A feelin like King David when he cut de pigeon wing.

It seems to me—indeed it do—I mebbe mought be wrong—
Dat people raly ought to dance when Christmas comes along—
Des dance bekase dey's happy—like de birds hops in de trees—
De pinetop fiddle soundin to de blowin ob de breeze.

We has no ark to dance before like Israel's prophet king :
We has no harp to sound de chords and help us out to sing ;
But cordin to de gifs we has we does as best we knows—
An' folks doant spise de vilet flow' bekase it ain't de rose.

You bless us, please sah, even if we's doin wrong tonight,
Kase den we'll need de blessin more an ef we's doin right,
An' let de blessin stay wid us ontel we comes to die
An' goes to keep our Christmas wid dem sheriffs in de sky.

Yes, tell dem preshis angels we's a gwine to jine 'em soon,
Our voices we's a trainin to sing de glory tune ;
We's ready when you wants us, an it aint no matter when—
Oh Marster, call you chillen soon, an' take 'em home. Amen.

* * * * *

When Christmas was over and we got back home how do you reckon I felt? Man, sir, I felt like a three-year-old shod all

around, with packs in every foot. I didn't have an ache nor a pain nor a hitch nor a wrinkle anywhere. There is nothin like runnin with the boys and girls; if you want to keep the machinery runnin smooth stay young a long time and grow old gracefully.

Finally at last onest more, bless the Lord for Christmas as it use to be, and Christmas as I found it last week down in the old Panther creek settlement.

CHAPTER XXVI.

HOW RUFUS LOST THE GIRL.

When Andy Lucas come by our house one day last week and rid up to the horse rack on a little flea-bitten gray filly my thoughts flew backwards to one swingin cold winter night a little better than 20 years ago. All I had to do was to shet my eyes and think a few stanzas, and onct more I was drivin the gamest and fastest horse that ever flung a shoe or left his track in all the regions round. Oncst more I was sailin down the old stage road in a spankin new buggy with the gone-biest most loveliest young girl that ever run a reel or jumped a jig in the old settlement I do reckon. Oncst more I was mixin and minglin with a gorgeous big crowd of boys and girls at a breakdown dance over there in the stump hills. And then onest more I driv home through a streak of weather which was cold enough to freeze the tail off a brass monkey—the saddest and the maddest youngster in 17 states and territories.

"OLD SPOT," THE HORSE.

"The little flea-bitten gray which now belongs to your wife's husband is a granddaughter of old Spot," says I to Andy—which naturally of course that brung on more talk.

In my day and generation I have had horses on top of horses, but for general road work—for speed and bottom and stayin qualities old Spot was the gamest and the best one of them all. He was a strawberry roan—built from the ground up—with a big white spot in his left flank. From pure nigger luck I had got the horse in a trade with a Kentucky drover, and he got better and faster and swifter every day the good Lord sent so long as he looked to me for his corn and fodder. By gracious, on a smooth hard road you could hear his hoofs pop for a mile away when he hit the ground with his feet !

It is the naked truth—for I would mortally hate to tell anything else in regards to a horse—that nobody ever driv up behind me whilst I was drivin old Spot. We would sometimes

meet people and pass people along the road, but when I onest started anywheres with that horse nobody would overtake us.

And by and by that winter—when the crops had turned out bully and I bought myself rich with one of these clost built buggies—there want a livin piece of horseflesh in the country that could pass us by, and there want a young lady in the settlement but what was more than willin to ride in a nice new buggy behind old Spot.

So consequentially when the party come off that time at old man Berry Ringstaff's over there in the hills, I put right in, I did, and made my engagements with Miss Callie Hickman, with the general understandin that I would drive old Spot to my new buggy, and we would knock the shine off of anything the country mought turn out. And Miss Callie—well, she traded with me on the spot.

Right then Miss Callie was another fellow's sweetheart, and nobody didn't know that any better than me. Her and Bob Travis had been gettin along powerful sweet and swimmin for two years past and threatenin to git married all the time. But that didn't make a blessed bit of difference with me. I was foot loose and fancy free, as Aunt Nancy Newton calls herself, and my onlyest chance was to keep company with some other fellow's calico and ribbons, or turn old Spot in the paster and stay at home.

Now then. On our way to the party that night me and Miss Callie soon got rale friendly and familious like. I tried my level blamedest to do some old-fashion courtin and carryin on, but she was jest the least bit skittish and pulled on the bit considerable. She finally at last owned up to it that she always did think a pile of me, but she had give her hand to Bob, and she must let him take her heart along with it. Come to find out and by gracious they had already set the day and laid in some of the weddin fixments. Man, sir, I never would of thought it up to that time—but I'll be hanged if it didn't make me feel plum sick for Miss Callie to be tellin me how clost she was to steppin off with Bob Travis. The moon was shinin bright like day. I could see her face peepin forth from the wrappins and trappins, and by gatlines I did think in my soul that she was the

prittiest, the neatest and the most sweetest thing that ever wore clothes. Up to that time I never did have no rale serious thoughts in regards to Miss Callie, but somehow it was mighty hurtin on me to hear her talk so kind and lovin like about another fellow.

Well, the general circumference of the calamity was that I had fell heels over appetite in love with Bob Travis' sweetheart. And that want all, white people. I didn't have no better sense, and I didn't do a blessed thing but pitch in and tell her so.

BUT THE GAME WAS "BRACED."

Naturally, of course, I can't now recollect for certain what Miss Callie said that night in respondin back to my burnin words, but anyhow she made a few scatterin remarks to the general extent that I was jest in time to be too late. I tried to hold her little hand in mine, but got busted on the first rattle out of the box. I next tried to steal a kiss, but slipped and fell before I got to first base. I thought I mought maybe take my arm and gently keep the wind from blowin her cloak off, but oncs more I run up agin a braced game, as it were.

But when we got to the party a tremendius pleasant change soon come over the general lay of the land. Bob Travis had got his back up and was foamn mad—not mad with me to hurt, but plum pizen mad with Miss Callie. He danced with every girl on the floor but her, and she danced with all the boys exceptin him. As for me, I danced around promiscus—first with one girl and then another, but Miss Callie was my mainest partner, and I was tickled most to death at Bob.

Finally at last Miss Callie up and told me on the sly that Bob Travis neednt to be swellin around and making such a tremendius big fool of himself—there was just as good fish in the creek as had ever been caught out, and she didn't give the snap of her finger, nohow. Then all of a suddent like—from pure spite and devilment, I reckon—she promised to be my sweetheart forever and a day, and said she would prove it to me as we went on back home that night.

In the main time the fiddlin and the dancin went on, and from general appearments, I reckon everybody had a felonious

good time. But I was forever glad when the fiddler struck off Home, Sweet Home, and the party broke up. Miss Callie had made me a promise, and said she would prove it true. I was waitin and wishin for the proof.

SO BUSY AND SO MAD.

As we driv off towards home old Spot riz on his hind feet two or three times, and then it did look to me like he would jest naturally split the earth wide open and scorch the native air. It was then nine miles home, or maybe a little better, but old Spot bit off 30 or 40 feet at every stride. Up hill and down hill—over the rough places as well as smooth ground—he went down after his knittin like it was a race for blood and death, and all the pullin I could do but only helt him smooth and steady in his wild and furious pace.

Now, when I have got to go somewheres in a big hurry or by my lone self, I do love a fast horse, and old Spot didn't shake my nerves a little bit. I knowed, dadblame him, that I could ride as fast as he could travel. Yet there was one time when I didn't want to ride so infernal fast. Miss Callie had told me she would be my own and onlyest, and promised to give me the proof on our return back home—which on that particular night the proof of the puddin was to hug and kiss the girl.

But, dadburn the luck, I didn't have no chance and no time to do a blame thing but hold that horse on the ground and keep him in the big road. I couldn't spare so much as one hand, and by gracious I needed both eyes on my work to keep from runnin into a smashup. I thought maybe after goin a few miles at that furious lick old Spot would slow down and give me a little chance to pay my doublebreasted regards to the most loveliest girl in the settlement. But not him—nary time oncst. Instid of that, it would seem like he got fresher and fresher, and faster and faster with every mile he bit off on the way towards home. How I did wish from the bottom of my heart that somebody would come along with a lazy mule—or even a blind steer that would work in harness—and make a pass at me for a swap.

And what was worse and still more of it, Miss Callie she was skeered nigh unto death. She didn't say nothin, but I stole

a look at her here and there, and bless the heavens if she want as white as a sheet. I was too dadblasted infernal busy drivin that fool horse to do anything more than talk a little, and the girl was too bad rattled even to talk. She was lookin to be throwed out and killed every minnit, and I don't raley think she caught her breath more than oncst in every two miles. Consequentially she wouldn't even say she loved me—she wouldn't even say she thought more of me than anybody else—dadblame it, wouldn't say nothin.

When we got to the Hickman place, I driv up to the front gate, and whilst old Spot was dancin and prancin and plungin back and forth, Miss Callie picked her chance, jumped out of the buggy, said good-by in a hurry and scooted in the house.

“SWAPPED SPIT” AND MADE UP.

You ought not to think it, but that was the last time I ever saw Miss Callie Hickman in the flesh. The next time I saw her she was Mises Bob Travis, and as shy of me as a three-year-old not even bridlewise. You see I didn't go over to the Hickman place to renew my acquaintance right away immediately the next mornin, and first thing I knowed Bob had been over there and braced the game oncst more. It would seem like he was meek and full of repentance and so was she. Whereas they swapped a little spit, as it were, and made up.

But I will die believin that I missed about half of my unworthy life jest simply because old Spot kept me so everlastin busy pullin and drivin and stayin in the road that night. Soon as possible I pitched in and swapped that horse off. And to be blamed square and honest, I got the daylights swindled out of me in the trade. But the more I thought about the scandalous, dirty way in which old Spot treated me that night, the madder I got, till I simply couldn't abide with him any longer.

FOR THE GOOD HE HAS DONE.

That night I was tellin Aunt Nancy Newton about the little flea-bitten gray which Andy had rid over to our house, and then from the best of my recollection, I told her the story of my trials and tribulations with old Spot.

"Well, Rufus, do you know that puts me in mind of the Widder Casey and her old gray mule," put in the dear, delightful old soul.

I am always tremendius glad when somethin puts Aunt Nancy in mind of somebody else, and I didn't do a blessed thing but lay low and listen.

"One day along in the Christmas I went over to spend the day with the widder, and whils't there I couldn't keep from takin notice of her old gray mule, which they call his name Pete. You recollect that mule, Rufus, and you recollect when old man Watts Casey bought him a four-year-old. That was 20 years ago, come next fall, and at that time Pete was a beauty, but as wild and tricky as they ever git to be.

"You will likewise recollect, Rufus, that inside of three months from that time we had a sad and sudden funeral in the settlement. Old man Casey was drivin Pete to his buggy one day, when, bless goodness, the mule got skeered and run away and threwed the old man out and broke his neck.

"Well, then atter that the widder she kept Pete, and for years and years he was a mighty good mule for general farm work. But he is now old and plum played out—don't scarcely yearn his salt, to say nothin about corn and fodder. So I up and ask the widder why in the round world she didn't sell old Pete dirt cheap on a credit, or give him away, and be shed of him.

"And what do you reckon she said, Rufus? She lowed that whilst Pete was old and stove up and no account for work, somehow she felt like she was bleeged to keep him and love him for the good he had done.

"At onest I remembered that Pete killed old man Casey. Now whilst I don't reckon the widder meant it in that way, what she said hit me in a funny place, and it was a good time of year for me to laugh a little anyhow."

CHAPTER XXVII.

CALICO JIM AND THE PEDDLER.

Every man in this valley of ups and downs has done something that he hadn't ought to of done. And I reckon about the most shabbiest item that stands out in the general bill agin me is the way I busted Andy Lucas at his own game, and win \$60 from him on Calico Jim.

You have probably heard tell of Andy Lucas, if you didn't know him in person for yourself. He owned more horses than any man that ever turned up in our settlement at one time and another. He was a natural born horse trader, and I have seen him ride six or seven different horses in one day—particular along in layin by times, or if there was a circus in town.

But Andy didnt only swap horses every chance that comes along. He was also a great hand at runnin horse races, and in the course of time he use to pick up a mighty swift one now and then. Andy's game was to ride over to the track at the Cross Roads on Saturday evenins jest to see the fun, as he puts it, and then hang around and git hornsnooggled into a race. But he wouldn't make the entry or take a bet till he thought he had a soft snap or a dead sure thing. He made it his business to know every horse in the country, and when he got a fast one he could mighty nigh always tell to a second how he would show down when he called him. In that way he most generally worked his game close and win his money like pickin it up in the big road.

Now, I have always had two or three weak pints, for handsome women and fast horses and good dogs, and when I was a youngster I use to love horse racin better than eatin when I was hongry. Me and Andy Lucas would run together sometimes in a horse swap or a free-for-all race, and whenever we locked horns it was who should and who shouldn't.

THE OLD FASHIONED RACE TRACK.

In them good old days when I was growin up they didn't have any high-flyin race tracks like they have got now. We

use to go out and find a level piece of road or a smooth trail across some old field, and then we would measure off for a quarter or a half mile dash. The starter saw the horses in at one end of the track and the judges saw them out at the other end.

Of course we didn't have on extra touches or fancy fixments about the track, and also we didn't have no jockeyin and monkey work worth mentionin. Every race was a go, wet or dry, and every man had to mount his own nag. Every horse had to come down with all the speed he had in him, and whensoever the horses got the word it was a race for blood from go to finish. Nobody didn't stop to find out whether the track was light or heavy, or fast or sticky. It was fair for one and fair for all, and every man had to come up to the scratch and let his horse take the chances.

And in them days you didn't have to go and place your money wild and promiscus like. You knowed who you was bettin with and what you was bettin on. One of the judges held all of the stakes, and after the race if you win you knowed where to go and git your money. If you lose you could "fire the southern heart," or go fishing if you want to.

CALICO JIM CHANGES HANDS.

One time Andy Lucas swapped for a little, long-bodied, trim-legged horse with dingy black and white spots and he called his name Calico Jim. You wouldn't of thought, to look at the horse, that he had much speed or bottom. He was ugly all over in spots as big as your hat to start with, and then he was sway-backed and raw-boned and had one glasse eye. But it didn't take Andy more than maybe one day to find out that he had put his saddle on a goer and a stayer. The next Saturday evenin he was over at the racetrack playin the same old game, and in less than two weeks he had beat every horse in the settlement with Calico Jim, and was in about \$50 as clear as a whistle.

About that time Calico Jim changed hands and went to eatin his corn out of my troft. I bantered Andy for a swap and we made it in a quick go. He had come to that pass where he couldn't round up any more bets till he trotted another horse, and I traded him a big fine-lookin strawberry roan that was

worth two or three of the spotted nag for swappin stock. I was willin to pay a little boot, and I reckon Andy was too, and so we swapped even and changed saddles right there.

Andy rode around over the settlement for two or three days blowin to everybody he could run up with about how he had done me up in another horse swap. But that was all right with me. I wanted Calico Jim and I was bound to get him, if Andy swapped the socks off of me into the bargain.

A CHANGE IN COLORS.

About the middle of the comin week a peddler passed through the settlement goin way down somewhere in the wiregrass country. He spent one night and day at our house, and when he started off he swung his saddle bags across Calico Jim. At the same time the little old skewbald, roman-nose mustang pony, which he rode into the settlement, was runnin loose in my lot.

Everybody thought the signs of the times stood for a trade, and it want very long before Andy Lucas was over to find out how much boot I got in the swap. But he come for nothin, it seems like, and 'didn't bring anythin to put it in. Whereas I let the general appearment stand to suit the settlement. I was layin for Andy.

Several weeks passed by and one day the peddler made another round up in our settlement and when he came back Calico Jim was still totin his saddle bags for him. But you never would of known the horse any more. I couldn't believe it was him myself till I took a good look at his glass eye. A big change of colors had come over the horse while he was usin down in the wiregrass country. The white spots had faded out and he was a solid color—a dingy, dirty black—from his foretop to his fetlocks. The peddler had went and rubbed out the white spots with a mixtry of charcoal and lampblack. His mane was all roached up like a piney woods colt, and his tail was bobbed off and ragged like it might of been chawed off by a hungry steer. But it was Calico Jim jest the same, all around and all over.

That peddler couldn't talk much good every day English,

but I reckon he must of been somewhere tolerable clost up to the amen corner when they was handin around the brains.

PLANNIN A PICK-UP.

It was on a Friday that the peddler returned back from the wiregrass country, and there was horse racin till you couldn't rest over at the Cross Roads the next day.

Soon that mornin I mounted the little old skewbald and rode on over to the track to find out all I could about the horses that would be goin that evenin. But before I started me and the peddler had come to a general understandin about how he was to play the game, and I knowed golnation well that he would be there to play it exactly like I told him.

"When you git the crowd worked up to a rich and reckless pitch take every bet that comes along," says I. "There aint no horse in these woods that can hold a light for Calico Jim, and you can't make no wishy-washy bets. Take odds as long as odds will come, and then take anything you can git. You will land all the money as easy as findin it in a hollow tree. And say, keep your eye on the long, tall man with red chin whiskers and a nose on him like a gourd handle. Rope him in by gum for everything he has got in his pockets. That is Andy Lucas, and he is the particlar son-of-a-gun that I am after."

The crowd was comin in right peart and thick when I got there, and some money was already goin up on the races. Andy Lucas was there with a new horse, makin his brags about what he could do, büt holdin back as usual for big odds or a soft snap.

ANDY TAKES THE SUIT.

The longest half of the day had gone, and it was a little past the reglar time for the races to start up, when a lonesome-lookin stranger rode up to the Cross Roads, bought a quart bottle of mid-dlin whisky and wanted to know the way to the closest stage-stand.

Presently a crowd of the boys got around the stranger (which the same was the peddler, understand), and wanted to know if his little black could use his legs any.

"Not much as I knows of," says the stranger, "but the man

that I got him from told me that he could do about a right smart for a common scrub."

"Turn him out in a race and see where he will land," put in one of the boys.

"No, I reckon not this evenin'," the stranger went on. "I aint very much on horse racin nohow, and maybe I had better be joggin along."

"I'll bet \$10 my horse can beat him and never feel the spur," says Andy Lucas.

"Make it thirty to ten," says the stranger, "and maybe I might see you on a half mile dash."

"It's a go and money talks," says Andy, "Put up your scads."

The stranger put up, and the other boys thinkin that Andy had rounded up a soft snap as usual, wanted to lay their money at big odds agin the hobtail black. The stranger picked up the bets comin and goin, till there was about \$200 planted on the race.

After takin another look at the shabby little black Andy comes up and wanted to double the bet. The stranger covered the pile and the starters got ready for the race.

Right at the jump the stranger's horse flew the track and Andy's nag went away two or three lengths ahead. The boys whooped and laughed all over themselves. But the next thing they knowed the little black comes back to the scratch and went to work in dead earnest like a thoroughbred. Quicker than scat she closed up the gap on Andy's horse and then run away and left him like he was tied to a hitchin post.

Andy pulled up and comes back to the judges wavin his hat and cussin and snortin and foamin at the mouth.

"Calico Jim, by the everlastin hills!" says he, "and if this race stands he will take the money with the nastiest trick that was ever turned on the track."

But the name of the horse and the color of the hair didn't count for nothin after the race was run. Andy looks like he had backed up against a snag without knowin it, and so there he was.

THE EVEN UP.

The stranger stuffed his winnins down in his old saddle bags and told his horse to change ends and tote the mail for the next stage stand.

But if I don't remember wrong that same peddler put up at our house for another night, and by daylight the next mornin he was out and gone, with \$50 in his inside vest pocket and the little old skewbald under his saddle.

A few hot soapsuds brought Calico Jim around to his right and proper colors, and he went on lookin to me for his corn and fodder for three or four years, till one day he stuck a nail in his foot and took the lockjaw and died.

Henceforwards after that Andy Lucas never was known to put up any more money on a horse race. He mostly took his out in swappin stock, and he wouldn't even talk horse talk to your humble servant.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

MISES GARNER AND HER SOFT SOAP.

There is most generally always a way where there is a will—particular if it is a woman's will and she wants to have her way. And consequentially they had a tremendius big rucus and confusionment over at the gravel cut, three miles down below the railroad station, one day last week. They het things up so hot and furious and raised sich a scandlous big fuss over there, till by gracious the air was blue for miles around.

THE "WHEREFORES AND WHENCENESS."

Naturally of course there was a woman in the case as usual. It was the railroad on one side and old Mises Garner—one of these plain, old, flint-and-steel women—on the other side. And in the general wind-up if that old lady didn't show out ahead of the game she made the other side more than willin to take out and quit even.

Now as to the wherefores and the whenceness thereof—it would seem like the railroad has been runnin of its cars so wild and reckless here lately till they had killed off a whole passle of Mises Garner's chickens and ducks and the like of that—which, you understand, she lives right there on the bluffs of gravel cut. She had took her foot and hand and went up to the station two or three times and put in her claim for damages, but the railroad wouldn't cough up worth a cent. The agent told her that they didn't pay for nothin less than a hog, and she would have to learn her chickens better sense than to run back and forth across the railroad tracks.

But finally at last one day last week a heavy loaded freight train run over the old lady's turkey hen—"and her a settin on 14 eggs"—and mashed her into a thousand odds and ends and scattered fragments.

That was one too many for Mises Garner. She fussed and stormed and cried, and stormed and cried and fussed, till she

saw that wouldn't even pay her for her time and trouble, and then she tore off and pitched out up the road to the station, with her fly bonnet in one hand and the feet and tail feathers of her dead turkey hen in the other.

She went up there to see the agent, and she saw him. She told her terrible story in plain United States and give out some of her strong personal opinions in regards to the railroads and the railroad men. But it was also pluperfect vanity and vexation of spirit. He wouldn't pay her a continental red cent for her turkey, to say nothin of the backage on chickens.

"I aint nothin but a pore widder woman," says the old lady as she walked out through the crowd and started off on her return back home, "but bless the heavens, I am 16 hands high and heavy as buckshot. I was livin right there before the railroad was built, and right there I will live till the last final shower comes and I have to go in. But in the maintime I am jest 16 hands high and heavy as buckshot!"

AND SHE "BILED THE POT."

Patient and long-sufferin reader—maybe you don't know the old lady Garner. But all them that have scraped up acquaintance with her can tell you that she is red-headed and rantankerous and come from fightin stock. You couldn't burn the woods and sift the ashes and find another one exactly like her.

From the station she struck a bee line and burnt the wind for home, and durin the balance of that day she was the goneby-est most busiest woman in the round created world. She dreened the ash barrel for lye, and raked and scraped the kitchen for soap grease. Then she made the necessary mixtry for lye soap, and built a roarin big fire and biled the pot. She biled it high and she biled it hot, and she stirred it with a sassafrass stick to make the soap particlar thick and slick.

But that want all—not by a whole tremendius big lot. In the still and solemn hours of the night she went forth and got her old soap gourd and toted that pot of fresh lye soap down to the railroad. She didn't stop there. She took and poured and smeared that soap on the steel rails for 200 yards.

When the day's work was done, and when Mises Garner laid her poor old body down to rest that night you may know she was weary with the storms and trials and tribulations of this vain and fleetin world. But in my own mind I have no doubt but what the last words she spoke before she fell off to sleep the sleep of the just were: "Sixteen hands high, and heavy as buckshot."

The next time you go over there to the gravel cut if you will stop and look up and down the railroad you can see the tremendius heavy grades both ways. Right frequent it comes to pass that heavy loaded trains run down to a stall and a dead stop along there—particular soon after a rain when the track is wet and slick.

But when it comes to makin things slippery and slick a little rain water aint nothin to a whole passel of fresh soft soap. So consequentially that night when the next freight train come thunderin down the road it had to stop over there at the gravel cut. By and by another one come thunderin up the road and when it struck the gravel cut the heavy grade and old Mises Garner's soft soap was too much for it, and so there it was. They couldn't climb over and they had to stop. They pulled open boxes and sanded the track free and heavy and promiscus. But still the trains couldn't come across the cut. Every time the engines snorted the wheels would slip and run backwards faster than they run forwards.

At the break of day next morning there was four trains all jammed up in a wad over there at the gravel cut, and in the maintime they had two tail-end collisions and ditched three loaded cars. It took two or three railroad bosses and the bridge gang till 12 o'clock that day to clear up and clean off the track and git them trains away from the gravel cut.

The railroad people then put in and had old Mises Garner arrested on the general charge of trespass and pure meanness, and she otherwise also took out papers of compellment on the railroad claimin damages for thirteen chickens, seven ducks and one turkey hen—"and her a settin on fourteen eggs."

The trial come off before Justice Doogin. The court maintained that if as big a thing as a railroad couldn't hold its own

when there was nothin but one old widow woman at the other end of the game they ought to take out and quit. Whereas, he throwed the costs on the railroad and Mises Garner went forth onest more a free woman.

There was some talk around in the settlement to the extent that the case would have to go on up higher. But I ruther think the railroad is more than willin to play quits. Yet still at the same time when they git rale hongry to see the old lady Garner they will know where to find her. She is right there at home on the bluffs of the gravel cut—red-headed and hard to to handle—"16 hands high and heavy as buckshot."

CHAPTER XXIX.

"DRINKIN" AND HOW TO QUIT.

Next to women and children I love horses and dogs. Man that is born of woman is full of mean whisky and fool notions. And as between the two it is hard for me to tell which I would rather not have—fool notions or mean whisky. I have seen men that has one or the other at various and sundry different times, and then I have seen men that had all of them at the same time. Accordin to my figuration it is about six with one and half a dozen with the other. But the wayward and wicked old world that we live in has now come to that pass where the doctors will tell you that whisky drinkin is a terrible disease, whereas in them plain old days when I was young and full of spirits—animal, vegetable and otherwise—it was counted as pluperfect pleasure by the men that followed it, and pluperfect devilment by all the rest of the human family.

MANY WAYS TO QUIT.

In my day and generation I have likewise also heard tell of many different ways to quit drinkin whisky. But to the best of my general knowledge and feeble abilities, about the best way to stop is to turn around and start the other way, and the best way to stop drinkin whisky is to stick to plain milk and water, like a seed tick to a nigger shin.

I recollect oncst upon a time that Dink Ashcraft quit, but the quittin time with Dink never did come till Mises Ashcraft went to town with him, and got drunk with him, and singin and cussin with him, and then when he sailed in and broke up her dishes and smashed her furniture into kindlin wood, she got the axe and went out and lit in and cut down his fine young peach orchard as clean as you would clear up a new ground. And then when Dink got sober and come back to his right mind it was quittin time at his house. Dink didn't mind havin the whisky disease himself, but when it got to be a family disease

that was about one more than he was willin to worry along with. So he turned loose and quit.

Years and years ago there was a man by the name of Garner—Green Garner—that lived in the old settlement back down on Panther creek, and he had about the worst case of the whisky drinkin disease that was ever discovered in the surroundin country. All the doctors and good old women in the settlement had tried to break him and cure the disease, but it was all vanity. By and by the preacher was called in to see what he could do with the case. It was a terrible disease and it called for a terrible remedy, so the preacher up and told Green if he didn't quit drinkin whisky, and quit right away immediately, he was goin to turn to a rat. He didn't have to quit unless it suited him, the preacher went on, but if he didn't quit, beyond all doubts he would turn to a rat within three days.

Green was powerful bad scared at what the preacher told him and made a solemn promise then and there that henceforward and forever he had drunk his last drop and would live a sober man if it killed him. That was soon in the mornin, but Green had already put a pint or two under his shirt for the stomach's sake. Way along late in the evenin he got dry as a bone, and all nervous and trembly, and presently he asked his wife if she reckons the preacher was tellin the truth about that rat business.

"You know the preacher was tellin of the truth, Green dear," says Mises Garner, "nothin but the truth and the gospel truth, at that."

"Well, Mary Ann," says Green, "which would you ruther have for your husband, a dead man or a livin rat?"

"A dead man all the time," says Mises Garner, and the poor woman meant it, too.

So Green he set his teeth and clinched his fist and stood it as long as he could. But presently he got up and stood there a minit, shakin and tremblin from head to foot like a leaf in a storm, then he made his old lady bring out the decanter and turnin around he says, says he :

"I hate mighty bad to do it, Mary Ann, but preacher or no preacher, rats or no rats, I must have a drink, and I'll be

doubly dadburned if I don't take it. But, Mary Ann, you have always stood by me in times of trouble and tribulations, and now if you see a tail a sproutin keep your eye on the cat."

I reckon, no doubt, if the preacher's remedy had but only worked out right it might of cured the disease and saved poor Green Garner. But it didn't work out like he said it would, and after Green got over his little scared spell and took the drink and didnt turn to a rat, he was so proud and glad till all the rats in creation didnt have no terrors for him. He then let the check rein down and went from bad to worse, comin up drunk every night that the good Lord sent, till at last Mises Garner had a dead man instid of a livin rat for a husband.

WHEN ANDY LUCAS QUIT.

Up to the present writin Andy Lucas never has quit off from the whisky disease for good and all. The main trouble with Andy is that he quits most too regular and frequent like. But everybody around Rocky creek remembers the time when a young doctor right fresh from college come into the settlement and scared Andy into leavin off the tobacco disease. He told Andy in so many words that if he didn't quit usin so much tobacco the next thing he knew his heart was goin to run down and stop on him, and he would then drop dead in his tracks. Well, of course, Andy want fitten to die at that time, and as for that matter he aint fitten till yet, but he didn't want to "go dead all of a suddent like," as he put it. He lowed he would have to pack up and go when his time come, but at the same time he would ruther pass away by slow degrees so he would have time enough to git fitten before he went. So after the young doctor had put in his opinions so strong and free, Andy he got up soon one mornin, put on clean clothes, washed his teeth, sent his pipe and all the tobacco he had over to Aunt Nancy Newton for a birthday present, and give it out that he had quit.

Now you might not think it, knowin the man as you do, but Andy Lucas stuck to his text for three days and nights hand runnin. And durin that he didn't do nothin much but tramp around his little farm and ride about the settlement and chaw

rosom and hickory bark and fat pine splinters, which the same he has since told me was a durn sorry substitute for tobacco. But on the fourth day he saddled his horse and rode over to the Cross Roads. It was Saturday, and there was a big crowd and lots of swappin stock on the grounds, though Andy didn't banter anybody for a trade durin the mornin. He jest set around and poked about, sayin nothin and lookin like a man that was in the low grounds of sorrow or either plum out of his mind.

About dinner time of day who should ride up on his old flea-bitten, gray mare but Uncle Tim Staggers, the grandfather of our own Jeems W. At that time Uncle Tim was a wiry little old man—the oldest in the country. His hair was white as snow, and his whiskers, which the same came down to the brow-band of his breeches, would of been white too, only but for the tobacco juice that had sifted through them during the past seventy-five years. As it was, they was what you might call a rich mahogany yellow.

It so happened that Uncle Tim had come over that day to lay in a fresh supply of tobacco. Torectly the old man came out of the store and took a seat with the crowd. He had then taken a big wad of the weed in his mouth and was grinding away to beat six bits and was spittin tobacco juice right and left.

"If it is a fair question, Uncle Tim," says Andy, "what mought be your age?"

"Eighty-seven and a gwine," says Uncle Tim.

"And about how long have you been using tobacco, Uncle Tim?" Andy went on.

"A leetle better than seventy-five years," says Uncle Tim.

"Jeeminy crackalew! What a blasted fool I am," says Andy, as he got a Waterbury movement on him for the store, where he bought a plug of tobacco on a credit and waded into it like a hungry boy in a sugar barrel.

And from that day to this Andy Lucas never has even so much as made out like he was going to quit.

LIGE RUNNELS AS A QUITTER.

In some regards the whisky disease has run about the same course with old Lige Runnels that it has with Andy Lucas. He

has been quittin most too durn frequent for his own good. As a quitter I reckon maybe Lige Runnels would take the rag and pnll up the bush over any man in the Rocky creek settlement. He quit onct upon a time when Sam Nettles beat the natural fillin out of him for goin off on a spree when it seems like his own and onlyest little girl was sick abed unto death, the same he has quit many times before and since. But the great trouble with Lige was he wouldn't stay quit.

But here lately old Lige has gone off to the city and let some new-fangled kill or cure doctors try their hand on his terrible whisky disease. Lige says they told him before he went that they would kill or cure him, and with me it is now very durn doubtful which it will be in the general results. The first night after the doctors put the fixments to him he got to walkin in his sleep, fell out of a high window and broke three or four ribs. When they found him next day he had took charge of a barroom, run everybody out and was drunker than seventeen fools in a wad. Next thing they knew Lige give it out that he had changed his notions and didn't want to be cured. He swore by the eternal jim-jams that he would be doubly durned if he would let anybody cure him. So they had to hang around and wait till he got good drunk and down, and then take him by main strength and tote him back to the doctor's.

From what Lige says about it, the doctors had told him how they wanted to cure him and send him forth as a sample to the long sufferin world, and they would be more than willin in his case to knock the terrible whisky disease into a double-back-action cocked hat free gratis for nothin. More than that, bein as it was him, they would pay his expenses and foot all of his whisky bills whilst he was in town.

It then looks to Lige like there was a picnic ahead, so he closed a trade with the doctors along them general lines. So you see by the time they got him back for the second dost he had three or four broken ribs and a big jag on him, not to mention the terrible disease, and it begins to look like they had bit off more than they could worry down and would be gettin powerful little sugar for a dime in the long run.

By and from his general appearments, it seems like old Lige

kinder got crippled, as it were, in his head, and the next time he got out they had to naturally run him down and tie him and put him in a cart and haul him back. I reckon by this time he was scared they might fool the general public and cure him before he could help himself. The plain and naked trnth is that Lige didn't want to get cured this year, but he saw a fine chance to have some glorious times for a few days on free whisky, and he is not the man to drive his wagon around a good thing when he sees it with his own eyes.

But you must remember that the doctors had took the contract to kill or cure and foot all the bills, and so they couldn't let him come back drunk without playin ruination with their business. When at last one day last week they sent him home it took three men to bring him, and they had to tie his feet and hands, at that. Naturally of course you would think that old Lige was drunk, but he want. He was ravin crazy and mad as fury into the bargain, but sober as a judge. He has now got so he will neither eat nor sleep, and he cusses the doctors with every breath because he can't drink any more whisky.

It is jest about sixes with the neighbors whether we have Old Lige drunk or Old Lige crazy. Maybe in the wind up it will be better as it is for the settlement in general, for from what I can hear comin and goin we will more than probably have to take out papers of compellment and send him off to the crazy siloam before we quit. But as between the two I am confident that old Lige would way yonder rather be drunk than crazy, or sober and in his right mind. It is different of course in different cases, but most any man would rather to git drunk than to go crazy ; I reckon you would and I know I would, whilst at the same time either one is a scandalation on the whole entire discovered and united world.

THE BEST WAY TO QUIT.

But of all the ways to quit off from the whisky disease I think the way in which old man Bunk Weatherford went about it is about the most safest and the best. He got religion last summer and quit. He quit right and he stays quit. Doctors and medicines are good enough for people that are sick, but

they can't count for very much when it comes to breakin a man from his fool ways and general devilment.

In a hand to hand fight with mean whisky, about three stanzas of pure, old-fashion religion—the sort that makes a man feel monstrous mean and weak and little in himself, but strong in the doctrines and mighty in the faith—is worth a whole wagon load of doctors and medicines. If you had seen old man Bunk a year ago and then meet him in the road now, you wouldn't know him from a stack of black cats ; he is so changed and different-like today from what he use to be. I reckon it had been ten years last summer since any livin man had seen Bunk Weatherford with clean clothes on. But now he puts on the neatest and the best that he has got every time he goes away from home. He wears a collar and a necktie now, which the same he hadn't put on any riggins like that before in twenty years up to last summer. You couldn't load a cannon with old Bunk to-day and shoot him off to town with his dirty clothes on.

When he first got religion and quit some folks said it wouldn't stick, but they talk way yonder different now. Bunk has fooled them and fooled them mighty bad. Whensomever you see a man—and particlar one that has been comin up drunk reglar and constant for fifteen years—that can walk the chalk line and stay sober and wear clean clothes for twelve months on a stretch, you are more than probable to find a man that has got a good live case of old-fashioned religion.

But Bunk didn't stop with changin his ways and his clothes. He has likewise also changed his name. He says his name used to be jest "old Bunk Weatherford," whereas now it is "Mister Bunkley J. Weatherford." And all the doctors and medicines in the world couldnt of made so many changes in one wayward and wicked old man. Bunk Weatherford has quit.

CHAPTER XXX.

THE NATURAL INCREASE.

The old song tells us that Jordan is a hard road to travel. I believe that. I reckon it is about like drivin a six-mule team up a hill agin a Maud S. record. But that aint nothin to the route and the gait that lots of farmers are tryin to go.

The farmer that has nothin to look to and nothin to promise himself and family, and nothin to bank on but his muscle is travelin the blamdest lonesomest and rockiest road in this country. He may live on a farm and call himself a farmer, but he is making a mighty sorry job of it. His right name is on some other list.

The farmer that makes a go on his line nowadays has got to work with his head and hands too. He must hum and hustle and hump himself and do a whole passle of thinkin into the bargain. Again I remark in passin that thinkin is monstrous hard work, but it pays.

THE ROCKY ROAD FARMER.

I can spot the rocky road farmer every clatter, wherever I see him. He shows his hand and carries his sign around with him everywhere he goes. People read a man's sign accordin to the way he totes it. He generally rides a one-eyed, flop-eared mule with a rope rein bridle, or maybe walks, and totes nothing but sorry tobacco. He is always kicking about hard luck and the weather and cussin the lawyers and merchants and politicians and lookin like the banks had busted and all of his friends was dead and buried.

If you go home with him you will find that the rocky road runs right through his place, center shot, leavin signs of laziness and hard times all around and through and through. Laziness and hard times run together as natural as battercakes and molasses. His fences set every way for Sunday, if they aint tumbled down, the gates sag or stand wide open and everything is slipshod,

ramshackled and run down at the heels. I don't like to see a farm like that. It always gives me an appetite to cuss a little around the edges. No garden, no flowers, no books, no papers, no music, no comforts, no pleasure, no nothin at all scarcely.

Comin right down to brass tacks and straight business, I don't take to the rocky road farmer worth a cent. I've nothin in particular agin the man, but he cusses so constant and kicks so promiscus, till his ways are three or four times too many for me. We can't exactly make music through the same whistle. I believe in livin while we live. I can't live more than seventy-five or a hundred years on the average nohow, and then I will have to go dead and stay there a long, long old time. But I don't propose to die till my time comes, and time can take his own gait aud suit himself about comin.

TAKING IT EASY.

Some farmers, and lots of folks that aint farmers, start to dyin as soon as they are born and keep on at it till they are dead. Seems like they are born on the other side of every question, in the objective case, as it were, or in the wrong time of the moon, and they sail right in and hurry and worry and kick and cuss and fret and fume and fuss till they wear out and cave in and flicker and fade away.

Now I makes the best of everything and enjoys all the good things of this life that I can get my hands on to the best of my knowledge and ability. Never comes a cloud over my sky, never falls a shadow on my heart and never runs a wrinkle across my brow, exceptin when I look back over the past and think of the good things I have missed. I was way up in the thirties before I found out that a man can git most anythings he wants if he is willin to ask for it and work for it, and I have been workin and askin ever since. I keeps the latch string on the outside all the time and a speech of welcome on my tongue for everybody. But when the rocky road farmer comes around growlin and grumblin about bad weather and sorry crops and hard luck it gives me the rickets and the eternal jamjams to hear him talk. The latch string does its duty tolerable well, but the stump speech takes the studs and wont go off right.

The farmer that's travelin the rocky road brings nothin with him and takes nothin away, and leaves nothin behind.

THE NATURAL INCREASE.

The farmer that wants to keep his feet out of the rocky road must have a weather eye on the natural increase. That is the winnin card in the farmer's hand, and one that it pays to draw to. The farmers who have happy homes to live in and good clothes to wear and fat horses and screaming saddles to ride, and meat in the smoke-house and corn in the crib, are men who understand the great blessins and advantages of the natural increase.

When a farmer gits a good run of stock and various and sundry crops growin around him, with the natural increase in full swing, he is in the middle of the big road that leads right on to the land of peace and plenty and love and liberty. When the day's work is done, and the gold of evenin meets the dusk of night, he can draw his bobtail night shirt about him and tumble down to pleasant dreams, knowin that while he sleeps and dreams and saws gourds his worldly possessions are growin and stackin up all the time. When a man gits his business in shape like that he is way ahead of the hounds, with time to spare and no fences to climb. He can use nothin but good tobacco and eat biscuits every day if he wants to. He can keep a saddle horse and ride, while the other fellow has to walk.

I was as poor as Job's turkey, and he was so poor till he had to lean up against a fence when he went to gobble, and an old bachelor to boot, when the great secret of the natural increase worked its way through my hair. What did I do? Got married right away, and then me and mother stocked the old farm and went to raisin colts and calves and sheeps and goats and pigs and chickens and babies. Now I takes my own time. We keeps a good table and life is worth the livin. I don't have to work only when I feel like it, and I never get tired nor sleepy nor hongry. I eats before I git hongry, takes out before I git tired and falls in before I git sleepy. The natural increase has made me easy and comfortable and independent.

A SAMPLE CASE.

It was Rube Burrows, I believe, takin history for the state-

ment, that went to sleep in Lamar county, Ala., a common man and woke up in Texas famous. Well, I went to sleep the other night feelin like a poor man and got up the next mornin about \$300 ahead of the music. The doctor had been to my house durin the night and when he went away he left a new baby in the family. I counts the baby in at \$100, beins as it was a boy baby and boys are powerful handy about the farm.

Then I takes a walk out to the lot and found a fine young colt follerin around after old Jenny, mother's buggy horse. I skeered the little fellow up to see if he had any action, and by gum, he put his head up like a game chicken and went off in a sideline pace. He's got some racin blood in him and a natural born pacer to boot, so I puts him down as worth \$100 as soon as he hit the grit. Next thing I heard was old Blossom, our full blood Jersey cow. She was lowin with mighty nigh every breath and shakin her head and ringin her bell reglar and lively. So I walks on down to the cowpen to see what was the matter, and there was old Bos takin on over a right young calf, combin his hair and washin his face with her tongue. It was a fawn colored gal calf and every bit Jersey, and the mother is the best butter maker in the country, so I puts her down at \$75 spot cash. Then I took a little swing around by the wagonshed and there I found old Chessie piled up with ten little pigs, all sound as hickory nuts and peart as chickens. So I put the bunch down as bein worth ten silver dollars, to say nothin of prospects and possibilities.

Now this begins to look somethin like business, thinks I to myself. If the natural increase runs along on this record, I'll be ding-donged if I won't have to buy me another farm or start a bank account before Christmas.

Then I ambles back to the house to tell mother all the good news. She counts a little while on her fingers, and smilin one of them soothin sort of smiles that always gives me an appetite for kissin, she says to me :

" Yes, and if I don't count wrong, Rufus, the old speckled hen will come off to-day with a good drove of little biddies. I set her with seventeen eggs, and they are black Leghorns and Coachin Chinas mixed. The Lord will provide."

CHAPTER XXXI.

SOFT SETTIN DOWN PLACES.

Life is vain and short and fleetin, but every man ought to manage so as to save up a stake and feather a nest for himself agin the comin of a rainy day. Maybe the rainy day will never come, and then maybe it will, but you can't make any big mistake by keepin your eyes on the weather. And then if it don't rain, and you don't die young, old age is comin swift and certain, and some of these days you will find yourself in need of a soft settin down place to rest.

Some men git old while they are young, and some stay young when they are old, but they will all have to come up to a stoppin place somewhere down the line. When the day's work is about done, and the race is roundin to a finish, and them aches and pains and tired feelins are crawlin up you will feel like floppin yourself down somewhere to rest. Then if you have a good soft place ready and waitin you can bless your stars and laugh at the world and say old Sanders was plum right, as usual.

A GOOD SCHOOL MARM.

This thing that some folks call fate is a powerful good school marm. I have been one of the scholars for a long, long spell, and she has learnt me some lessons that I never will forget. I couldn't forget them if I wanted to and tried my level best. She also gave me some terrible hard knocks and made me wear the dunce cap many and many a time. But I don't stand head yet. And I aint quit school, neither.

In my brushin around I have learned that a man can soon run the savin-up-for-a-rainy-day business into the ground if he wants to. He can rake and scrape and wear and tear his life out before the rainy day comes, or the first frost of old age falls. Some men want to git rich all of a sudden like—straddle a fortune at one jump, as it were—and then take life easy and live high and run riotous in their old days. But if you will watch a man like



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that you will notice that he most always gits old quick and lives hard and dies before his time. He may make stacks and cords of money, and put it where the dimes will turn to dollars every now and occasionally, but yet feel poor and live poor and die poor. Money makes the mare go, but it can't make good, solid grub go and stay when a man's machinery runs down and the bottom drops out of his stomach.

So when you come to count up the costs I would ruther let everything go as fast as it comes and take my chances about the settin down place, than to wear myself out and have to quit before I find time to stop and rest. Man, born of woman, "breaks" and "spurts" too all-fired much for his own good. He runs too high up or either too low down. If he would strike a level, and make a good average, and let well enough alone he would hold his speed better and stand up much longer.

JIM WAS A QUITTER.

Little Jim Weatherford, a half brother to Bunk, was what you might call a quitter. He went in for the whole hog or none, and got none at last. He scored a good start and got away with a fine burst of speed, but he broke all to pieces before he got on the home stretch and then went lame and quit.

The main trouble with little Jim was he was too infernal nervous and smart. He was born in a hurry, and lived and died at about the same rate. He was a hustler from breakfast all the way. He didn't have nothin to start with but eighty acres of land and one good mule, but he had his head set on makin money, and he made it. He took the lead row himself, and everything and everybody on the place had to follow and keep up. He lived at home by himself, and lived close, and when he got a dollar he swung on to it till the eagle screamed and another one turned up to keep it company.

Little Jim had been born and brought up in the midst of poor folks and hard times, and when he come to be a man he gives it out that he was goin to put plenty of money in his inside pocket, and then take out and have a good time. He was good as his word to some extent, and at 30 years old he had three plantations and twenty-odd head of mules, and was payin taxes

on \$7,000 worth of stuff. And yet, I never saw him in his life when he want hard run and headin straight for the poorhouse, to hear him talk it. He made money and got rich, but he never could see it in that way. With him it never come time to take out, and he never did git to a settin down place. He raked and scraped and starved and stinted and saved up for a rainy day, but when it come he was out and gone. He was only a little turned thirty when he died, and the doctors give it out that there want anything the matter with him in particular—jest a general all around kerflumux. It looked like his machinery wore out and run down and stopped, and there he was. He was always too close and stingy to get married, too poor, as he puts it, and so far as I knew he never handed his name down to a comin generation. So his money went by long division to his poor relations and the lawyers.

Little Jim pitched his tune too blame high, and to be certainly of course it didn't take him very long to sing the song out.

THE GOOD AVERAGE WAY.

But now there was old man Jerry Scroggins, that took the good average way and kept it to the end. He want to say speedy, but he held his own and kept his feet and stood the pace through a good long heat. He started out and never got rich, but at forty he was tolerable well fixed, and every time he took a step forwards he would drive down a peg so he couldn't slip back any. He was slow but steady. Gradually by degrees he bought a good farm and stocked it, and built a nice home, and planted out a fine orchard and raised a big family. He took his own time and went a good, safe gait, savin his strength as well as his money, and was fresh and sprightly and active as a cat at sixty. He never was in any big hurry, but he hit a reglar steady lick, knowin that it would take him through by-and-by. He took everything easy and natural, and made home happy and life pleasant. He lived to see all his children and some of his grandchildren grown and married and settled, and then when he got old and poorly and weary with the storms of life he had him a warm, soft settin down place to rest.

But old Jerry made one little break in his old age that you

wouldn't of been lookin for from a safe and prudent man like him. He let his foot slip once, and if he hadn't caught the step mighty quick he would of lost his rest and fluttered out into the cold world alone. You ought to have a nest of your own and it well feathered when you git old and feeble, and then you ought to stay with it and stick to it till the sun goes down and the evenin stars sing together.

CROWDIN THE OLD MAN.

When Jerry Scroggins was ninety years old and a goin, with his good wife dead and buried and all the children married off, he got lonesome and wanted his youngest son, Blev, to move in with his family and run the place and keep him company. Of course Blev and his wite jumped at the chance, cause the old man was now on his last legs and he had the prettiest home and best farm in the Rocky creek settlement.

So they moved in and treated him kind and gentle and lovin till the next thing the rest of the children knowed the old man had made over the home place and all of his property to his son, Blev, and his son Blev's wife, and their children forever.

"I am old and weak and helpless and tired, Blevins," said old Jerry, "and all I want now is a place to rest easy and die in peace. You can run the farm and your wife can keep the house. Let me have my old chair here in the corner and eat at the table as long as I live, and the place is yours."

So he made out the paper givin everything to Blev, and Blev's wife she took the paper and put it way under lock and key.

Now it want very long after that before they got to crowding the old man considerable, and presently it begins to look like they would soon crowd him and his old chair from the corner, and crowd him out doors, and crowd him into his grave. Blev's wife fussed and ding-donged at him and crowded him terrible because he would chew tobacco and couldn't always spit right where he was lookin. He had shed his third set of teeth and lost his strength so he couldn't spit much past his nose, and it follows he made right smart mess around the fireplace every day.

And Blev's wife jawed and nagged at him about spittin on the floor, and messin up her house, till the old man got tired of it.

One day when the sky was calm and clear, and peace was broodin, like a gentle spirit, over the whole family, old man Jerry happened to think he had left somethin out when he was making the place over to Blev. He called Blev's wife by one of her pet names and told her to please bring him the paper so he could put in everything right. She went and brought it out like she was told, and quick as a flash the old man laid it over behind the back log in the big fireplace.

"There now, young woman," says he, "this house and this farm and everything on the place belongs to Jeremiah Scroggins in his own name. You and Blevins can now shell out and hustle for yourself till I get ready to move. In the meantime I will use as much tobacco as I want to and spit where I durn please. I can have all the room I need and take my rest and not be in the way. I bought this place and built this house and planted out the orchard with my own hands, and I'll be goldarned if you and Blevins can crowd me out in my old age."

Then the old man went to his chest and got out a fresh plug of tobacco, pulled his chair around in front of the fire place, put his feet on the chimney jam and let the juice of the weed fly right and left.

Blev and his folks then had to move out, and when the old man died he had made a will leavin his property to be divided between all his children, exceptin his son Blev, and his son Blev's wife.

A WIDE OPEN WEATHER EYE.

I am not rich, and maybe I aint smart nor very good lookin, but I will bet a pair of fine mules that I will never git turned out in the cold for want of a settin down place. I will have a nest of my own to start with, and if that slips out from under me I have got three or four soft places picked out, where I can go and set down and rest when I get old and tired.

There is James Sanders Scroggins that didn't have no ma when he turned up at my house, and never did have no pa that anybody knows of. But I toted fair with him and give him a

boy's chance. He has got a good home now and plenty to go on, and I am as welcome at his table as if I was his own dear daddy, if not more so.

And then there is Will Tom Pickens. He wouldn't have a pritty home and a good, smart wife and four promisin children to-day if I hadn't fixed up a little scheme and worked it so he could marry Mamie Lou Galloway. I was for Will Tom and Mamie Lou, right or wrong, when their own folks was tryin their blamdest to bust up the match, and there is a warm place in their house for me whenever I need it. I got a letter from Will Tom the other day, and this is the way it runs :

To the Hon. R. Sanders, of Rocky creek.

You dear, delightful old Dickunce :

You wouldn't come to see us Christmas or New Year, but we have got plenty of somethin good to eat and drink savin up again you can git off and come down. I have got four more hogs to kill, and Mamie Lou left the biggest turkey and put away a basket of eggs and also a large bottle of vegetable matter to go with them. Come as soon as you can and stay as long as you golnation please. We will look till we see you comin.

Yours through thick and thin,

WILL TOM PICKENS.

Moreover also, Mises Josephine Crittenden, little Jo Runnels as she used to be, is married now, lives down in the Flat Woods and is doin well. She always did think a great pile of me, and if it ever comes to pass that I may run out of soft settin down places I know she will have a comfortable corner somewhere around her home, where she can tuck me away and keep me warm.

It aint much probable that I will ever git big rich or run for Congress, but you can bet your boots and your side whiskers that if I ever git old and broke down and in the way generally I will find me a soft place, where I can flop down and curl up and go to sleep as neat and snug as a meadow mouse under a fodder stack.

CHAPTER XXXII.

A FEW FATHERLY LINES.

You have noticed from the papers, I reckon, that a young American citizen who got aboard of this planet in the great and growin State of Alabama the other day, has been named for your meek and humble fellow servant. It has come to pass somehow or somehow else that the only boy at my house is a little girl, and up to this present writin I have never handed my name and fame down to the comin generation as far as I know. What the future time to come will bring forth the good Lord only knows, but anyhow I am glad to hear that a little Rufus has come down to kick up his heels and rule the roost in one Democratic family.

When a man gets old and beefy and well along into the vale of years and tears like me, there ain't no tellin how soon he will have to lay down his hand and jump the game, and turn his toes up to the sod and the daisies. But as the good Book says, "Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof," and while I think about it I believe I will drop a few friendly and fatherly lines to the Democratic youngster who bears my maiden and my family name. So here we go:

THE OLD MAN'S LETTER.

Rocky Creek, July 1, 1892.

To Rufus Sanders Barnett,

Pine Level, Ala.:

YOU DEAR, DELIGHTFUL LITTLE RASCAL: I am old and you are young. You have entered for the race and scored for the start, and I am comin down the home stretch. But still at the same time it won't hurt nothin for me and you to have a little family talk together. You have got my name ———, but we will let that pass. If you can stand it, I can.

Now maybe you wouldn't think it jest to look at me, but I was a baby once, and a boy baby at that. My recollection don't

run that far back to be certainly of course, but some time and somehow I have been there all the same. I have seen the time when I was as little and helpless and good lookin as you. There was a day somewhere back down the line when I could tie my legs in a double bow knot and put both of my big toes in my mouth at one pop. I couldn't eat as much then as I do now, but I run powerful deep on good milk. And as for that, I like milk and a plenty of it till yet. I believe a man would have to live two or three hundred years before he could get over his early raisin. In them good old days I was the general boss of the whole entire Sanders family, and all hands and the cook had to skip and skeedaddle when I lifted my voice in the wilderness. But in the run of time the rule of the roost changed hands, as all things change here, and the glory of Rufus was departed.

It may be that I am some older in years, and older in devilment than you are. But I am always young and fresh in my heart and thoughts and feelins. I can take your little hand in mine, Rufus, and talk with you as natural and as easy like as if I was a boy baby once again. You see I have travelled the same old rough and dusty road that your little feet must cover in the days and weeks and years that are yet to come. I have been all the gaits, and I have covered all the ground, from Tuckers mill to Possum bend, and from Rocky creek to Weaver's wood yard. If I could only go foot and spell up again I would play the game some different to what I have. But my race is run, my fight is fit, and the past is past. No more of that.

THE KICKS AND CUFFS OF TIME.

If you don't take wings and fly away before your day, Rufus, you will have to bear the kicks and cuffs of time the same as millions of other boys who have came ahead and gone before. I know exactly what every boy born and brought up on the farm has got to go through and put up with. I remember, even down to this good day and this blessed hour, how infernal handy a cotton-headed, shirt tail boy is around the farm. You will git to play some, but you will have to draw the water, and bring in the wood, and git up the cows, and feed the stock, and

make the fires, and sweep the yards, and tote out the slops, and churn the milk, and rock the cradle, and along so and the like of that all down the line. You will have some good luck and some bad luck. You can't see it that way as you go along, maybe, but everything will be for the best. If you stick to your knittin and keep your feet under you and stay in the race you will come down under the wire in good shape at the finish. If you have got the right sort of stuff in your general make up (and I would bet the finest young mule in my paster on that) you will yet pull through and come out on top and be a man. They couldn't build a brick wall around you high enough to keep you down. The hard and rough and plain and tough life that a country boy leads on the farm runs across the grain powerful to the boy, but it is the makin of the man. Every time I go up to the city I come home singin praises and thanksgivin for my early country raisin. When I see them pale, hatchet-faceted, narrow-chested, stoop-shouldered, gimlet-rumped town boys I am glad I come from the highristocracy of honest hearts and hard knuckles. I feel like if I was to spit on a crowd of them town chaps I would drown the whole business.

You must make up your mind to take what comes and be thankful and say nothin. If you go into the battle of life and whip the fight you will need a clear head and a steady hand and a strong arm. You will need muscles as well as brains. Necessity is the mother of inventions, and also the father of endurance. What some folks call genius is simply the strength to pitch in and work and the grit to stay in the fight till the cows come home. Talent is mighty close kin to industry. They are first cousins, if not twin brothers.

BE STRAIGHT GOODS.

When you come to be a grown up man it is more than likely that you will vote for other people. It may be that you will want other people to vote for you by and by. Turn about is fair play, and the race will stand wide open from president down to constable. Runnin for office is one of them great American privileges granted to every man that cumpers the soil and breathes the free air of this great country. If you want the

job and can git the votes, you will be president or governor or go to congress some of these days, and if you run on the regular ticket and I live long enough you can count on my vote and the solid Rocky creek delegation. As old Zeke Strickland used to say we will vote for you "as a eunuch."

But whether you run for office or stay at home to rock the cradle and tickle the bosom of the old farm, be straight goods. Don't fly too high, and don't put on too durn many fancy trimmins. You can fool yourself, but you cant fool the folks. About the biggest old fool in this wide world is the man that thinks he is smart enough to fool the whole entire human family. It simply cant be did, Rufus. If you cant keep a horse to ride, stay at home or walk. Borrowin is worse than beggin. When you get old and ugly and beefy like me you neednt to wear a fried shirt and a paste board, picket-fence collar because some other fellow does. Be natural and honest and straight goods. Tote your own skillet and take things easy. Please yourself and and your own homefolks, and take your chances with the rest of the country. Dont go sailin around under false colors. Let the Sanders tub set on its own bottom first, last and for ever more.

THE WORLD MAY NEED YOU.

If you live and luck well the chances are that you will come up to be a man by and by, Rufus. I don't doubt but what you are now powerful "cute and sweet," as the women folks would say, but you can't stay right there where you are all the time. You will have to come out of that. The world is countin on you for the makin of a man. She may need you in her business some of these days.

I don't want you to be a baby always and a few days over. And remember right along here that it takes somethin else besides beef and bones to make a man. You never will be a full grown man, no matter how much you weigh, or how much you measure from tip to tip and in the girth, till you tote a man's head on your shoulders and a man's heart under your shirt. I have seen grown up babies. I saw a baby once—a reglar whinin, blubberin baby—that stood six feet or better in his socks, and weighed somethin like 180 pounds. It was a sad

sight to see, but I saw it. But it want all the boy's fault. Luck had run dead square agin him all along the line. He had been petted and spoiled and slobbered over and waited on and honeyed around and watched after till he want worth his weight in sap saw-dust or turnip tops. He was cut out for a man, but somebody had went and made a mess and a botch of the raisin. His body got to be as big as a prairie steer, but he never did git his head and heart out of the swaddlins. He always needed somebody to wash him and dress him and spank him and put him in his little bed. He couldn't of drove a blind mule to mill or bought a barlowe knife on his own hook.

Make up your mind as soon as you can, Rufus, that you will be a man some time, and not always a baby. I want you to grow and fill the measure of a man jam up all around, or either change your name right away immediately before it gits too late.

SHOW YOUR HAND.

If I could only spit on the slate and spile out and start over I would save myself from many of the trials and troubles and tribulations that I have been through with. But a man must learn to live and live to learn.

Whenever you git a call, Rufus, show your hand—cards or no cards. Be somethin and stick to it, both in religion and in politics. Don't set yourself up as better than the man that built the church, and don't take up a fool notion that the country couldn't worry along somehow without a statesman by the name of Sanders. But you can manage so as to have some opinions of your own, and then stand up and talk out in meetin for one side or the other. I would rather go wrong now and then than to never be right.

But before you git into politics sue out a divorce between your political doctrines and your personal feelings, and then let the men that are after the offices do their own fightin. You will never know what a thunderin big job it is to do the fightin for a political campaign till you try it. It might be some better for you to take my word for it and throw up the job before you start into it.

At the same time I want you to cover the ground you stand

on. If you go into a fight and git the livin socks beat off of you, brace up and take it like a man. Don't go around whinin about "underholt" and "fudge" and "foul ball." Go in for an open field and a fair fight, and then if you don't win you can keep the other fellow monstrous busy till the show turns out.

If you live in this country you will more than probable have to vote the straight Democratic ticket. Nobody but a free nigger or a powerful sorry white man will vote with the other side. Still it is a free country, and every man can vote as he blame pleases. Or he can stay at home and let other people do all the votin if he wants to.

But don't you fail to "show down" at every call. Brave and honest men dont dodge and dicker and trim and trade and straddle. The top rail is a delusion and a snare, and at the last it cutteth like a double-back-action two-edged-sword. Whether you are a Baptist or a Methodist, or a Democrat or a Republican, be a man and show your colors. Don't wear a Democratic dough face to hide a Republican stump speech on the end of your tongue. Don't put on a sheep skin, while the wolf's teeth stick out. You can't leave a white man's track with a cloven foot.

IN THE MIDDLE OF THE ROAD.

And then, in all things be clean-cut and plain, standard weight and full measure—four quarts to the gallon, twelve inches to the foot, and three feet to the yard. I would ruther be an old-fashioned man than a new fashioned fool.

Stick to the main tent and fight shy of the side show.

Be a natural born Southern gentleman, without any flies or new-fangled frillins. Vote a straight ticket.

Dig down to rock bottom and plant your feet on the mud sills of truth and principles. Then you can face the world, the flesh and the devil, and whip the fight ninety-nine times in the hundred.

You can git anything in this world if you will pitch in and ask for it and work for it. Don't be afraid to ask, and don't be ashamed to work.

You must crawl as a child, and toddle as a boy, and then learn to stand up and walk as a man. Swom without gourds.

Chew your own tobacco. Hold your head up. Look the sun in the face. Git mad slow, and git over it quick. Help the weak and raise the lowly, and tell the haughty highflyers to kiss your black cat's foot. Be brave and honest and sober and virtuous, and you will be happy. Hold up the family name and fame and standin, and if I die before you run for Congress, I will leave you a full-blood Jersey gal calf and the best pair of mules on the Sanders farm.

Yours for plain goods, tariff reform and the straight ticket.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

STANDS BY THE OLD FARM.

Say, were you never a plow boy and did you never pull the bell-cord, on a summer day, over a little, needle-rumped devilet of a mule in a new ground full of stump ; and did you never feel, from the bottom of your unwashed feet to the top of your tangled head, that achin and itchin to say cuss words you'd rather not feel again?

Well, I have. What your Uncle Rufus don't know about the farm ain't worth learnin. He has been all gaits and learned the links by note, as it were. He has breasted the winter wind and braved the summer sun and faced the autumn gale and wrestled with the spring lazies. He knows the farm like a book—yea, even as the ox knoweth the fodder stack, and the yard dog knoweth the kitchen window, and the old bay horse knoweth the creakin of the crib door. Most people who write for the newspapers about the farmer and the farm don't know anything about the subject or the situation. Take one of your real, regular newspaper fellows and drop him down on a first-class, well regulated farm, and he would be like a blind calf in high oats, or a bobtail dog at a log walkin. He wouldn't know a bull-tongue scooter from a buzzard-wing sweep, or a meat axe from a covered wagon.

I know something about the ups and downs and ills and evils and joys and sorrows and cares and comforts of the farm and the farmer's life. The man that knows the woods is the man to blaze the way.

BRIARS AND BERRIES.

I learned long ago that life was not all berries and no brains. It's a blame good lesson, and I know it by heart now. I have been over most of the rough places, and I have seen the rocky side of farm life. I remember, same like it was yesterday, when I was a boy how I had to git up and git, rain or shine, hot or cold, wet

or dry. There was work to be done, and they said I was a powerful handy boy about the farm. I used to think the winter winds would draw me up and tie me into a double bow knot, and then in the summer I had to wear my woollen clothes to keep the sun from warpin my ribs. Sometimes I would get good tired and big lazy and swear eternal disgust for the farm. But then, when the weather was fine and game was plentiful and fishin was good and the fruit crop got ripe, me and the old farm would shake hands and make up again. So in the course of time I learned the lesson that every boy must learn somewhere along the line. Brairs and berries grow together, and if you get the berries you must go through the brairs.

SOMEWHAT BUNGED UP.

But the old man and the old farm are fast friends now. I stayed with her and she stood by me, and here we are together yet. We fought shy of mortgages and dodged the credit system and pulled together, and if I have my way about it we will go on together to the end. We have had our trials and troubles and comforts and contentment. We are somewhat bunged up, but still in the race. We have both grown older and uglier and balder in patches. The old farm has been scraped and scratched, and dug up and ditched, and cut and slashed about, and turned over and patched up till she puts me in the mind of a sheddin rooster after a rain storm. But all I have to do is to treat her right and tickle her bosom and give her a fair chance, and when the harvest season comes the corn crib is full to the rafters, and the cotton is piled up under the shed, and the fodder is in the stack, and the hay in the loft, and plenty in the pantry and peace everywhere.

Old Squire Wilson went to town once and dropped in the Probate office to see the Judge on some business. The Squire was about three sheets in the wind and the other one a flutterin, and spittin tobacco juice right and left on the new carpet. The Judge pointed to the spit box and admonished the Squire to spoil the box and spare the carpet.

"Who paid for this carpet?" says the Squire.

"The people of the county paid for it," says the Judge.

"In that case," says the Squire, "I own an interest in the blame thing, and I'd like for you to chalk off my corner and let me spit on it whenever I come to town."

Well, you see this corner of the country belongs to me. The old farm was chalked off for the Sanders family fifty years ago. It gives me plenty of stretchin space and elbow room. Man that is of the flesh fleshly loves to call himself bull of the woods. It's a family weakness, my son. Here I can raise my own tobacco and chew when I feel like it and spit where I durn please. And here I expect to eat three square meals a day three hundred and sixty-five days in the year, sleep the sleep of the just and smoke the pipe of peace till the general roll is called, and the gold of evenin meets the dusk of night.

YOU MUST TOTE FAIR.

If you want to play quits with the old farm I've got nothin to say. It's your funeral, sonny, and you must head the procession. You pays your money, and you takes your choice. But you must tote fair with the old farm. Don't go off with your under lip at half mast and say you quit because you couldn't make anything on the farm. I know there are powerful few young men that make money on the farm. They don't mostly because they wont. They work on the average about six months in the year, and then put on their Sunday clothes and sail out to spend what they've made. You can't get money ahead at them licks—not on the farm. In this country the time used to was when a man could get rich without tryin much. But things have changed around wonderful since the war. Big plantations and mules and niggers have played out, and the man who gets there on the farm now-a-days has got to do all the thinkin and most of the work.

And as for that, a man has got to do a right smart thinkin if he makes a go on any line. It's monstrous hard work, thinkin is, but it pays. I'd rather split rails, or drive an ox team, or clear up a new ground any day if the pay was the same. The young man that sets out to be a farmer from Farmersville must work with his head and his hands, too—but especially his head. My natural, naked labor on the farm aint worth any

more than the work that the blackest nigger in the country would do for 50 cents a day, but when it comes to head work I can make the road mighty dusty for the man that keeps up, and throw the distance flag down on lots of em that's younger and handsomer than me. In this day and generation the thing is to work while it is called day, and keep up a pretty steady thinkin all the time.

But as I was sayin, you must tote up fair with the old farm. Don't go around shootin your mouth off about havin no chance to do anything or be anybody on the farm, and the hard times and sorry livin in the country. There is nothin particular the matter with the old farm. She has been doin her duty every time we called on her for fifty years, and she will go on bloomin and blossomin as regular as summertime comes long after you turn your toes up to the daisies, my son. You mustn't believe everything people say runnin down the farm. It has made many a man easy and comfortable and independent and happy. It will do the same thing for you if you pull off your coat and spit on your hands and pitch in and demand your rights.

We have heard a heap here of late, specially in the papers, about the poor, oppressed, long-sufferin farmers. That sort of preachin wont go down for your Uncle Rufus. It gives me the tired alloverers and a comin appetite to cuss a little around the edges. Whenever you hear a man snortin and cavortin around about "the down trodden, debt-ridden farmers," or "the honest but distressed and poverty-stricken tillers of the soil," git out your little note book and put him on your list. Write him down as a second-class farmer, or a candidate for office, and you'll plug the bull's eye nine times in ten.

A SAMPLE CASE.

If a farmer ain't free, white and twenty-one, all wool and a yard wide and a foot thick, and the happiest man in the country, he ought to be. Take me for a sample. Three score years and a-goin, but as healthy as a yearlin boy, hard as hickory and as sound as a dollar. No aches, no pains, no medicine, no doctor's bills, no debts, no ugly dreams, no loss of sleep or lack of appetite.

And look at the good lady, (Mrs. Sanders I mean.) There she is, as rosy and round and fresh and handsome as a gal of seventeen. There is a right smart sprinkle of snow on her head, but lilies on her brow, and roses on her cheeks, and cherries in her lips, and violets in her eyes, and dimples in her arms, and sunshine in her smile, and music in her laugh. By golly, if they'll get up a show of handsome women at the Southern Exposition I'll enter her and bet the best mule on the place she takes the first premium over a thousand entries!

No, sir, town life is all right and nice enough I reckon, for them that it suits; but I don't suppose it would suit us. We are playin for keeps. Better is a happy home and peace and quiet therewith, than a few years of hurry and worry and high flyin, and then—the gable end of a misspent life. I am not old enough to hurt yet, but I am gettin most too far along in the vale of years to stay out late at night and take big chances and trust to luck to pull me through. I'd ruther hold the hand I've got, if it gives me a square deal and a dead sure game, than to draw to others I know not of.

CHAPTER XXXV.

BAD LUCK AND HARD TIMES.

New Year has come and gone, and the next thing is something else. There is a right and proper time for everything, and the time for feasting and fiddling and dancin and frolickin is now about over with till Christmas comes again. The past is past, and you can't churn butter from the milk that is spilt. My doctrine is that people ought to take things as they come and live as long as they can while they are at it, but out in the country it will soon be a good time of year to hang up the fiddle and the bow, and trot out the shovel and the hoe.

HARD TIMES.

Money is a right smart different from men. It never gets tight till after Christmas. Hard times come mighty nigh every year right about when country folks are windin up the past and unwindin for the future, when the good average farmer is rollin logs and fixin up fences and burnin brush and clearin up the briar patches, and you can catch the smell of fresh plowed dirt hither and yonder.

I aint very much when it comes to moanin and wailin about hard times till hard times come. I don't believe in crawlin and walkin when I can ride, and it is plenty time to burn down the bridge after you git across the creek.

Fifteen or sixteen years ago to-day Dunk Strickland swore off from gettin drunk for twelve months to come. He had been on a spree continually all the time since Christmas and his good wife gives it out that it was now his turn to quit. She was way yonder the best man in the family and nobody didn't know the facts any better than Dunk Strickland did. So she got out the family Bible and made Dunk come to his knees and kiss it and swear by all that was high and holy, that he wouldn't get drunk any more till the next New Year followin. And Dunk kept his

oath. He didn't git drunk any more that year. He jest simply stayed on the same old drunk the whole year through.

Hard times aint comin this year. They have already come. If a farmer aint got plenty of corn in his crib and meat in his smokehouse, and other farm producements of his own raisin, it will take tall hustlin and a heap of it to put him out of the woods. Like me, he may have to go out and kill a pig and eat the head and the tail in order to make both ends meet.

A VICTIM OF THE WAR.

Old Asberry Pickens (and he was a full brother to Uncle Tommy Pickens, Will Tom's daddy,) got knocked out! the easiest and quickest by a little hard times of any man in all my acquaintances. He set a bad example to follow, and a good one to break away from.

Before the war old Asberry had a big plantation, and it well stocked and in good fix, down on Panther creek. He also had niggers and mules and mules and niggers till you couldn't count them. He wore fine clothes and drunk good whisky and used the best tobacco and rode a fat horse with a screakin saddle. He wouldn't put his foot into a pair of boots that cost less than \$10, and he maintained continually that the world couldn't turn out any goods that was too fine to go on his back. He went in very deep on good clothes and fine style and family standin. When he went to town or to church in his carriage his driver had the management of the team, and if the horses didn't have their heads pulled way up and a patent leather shine on their hair a nigger skin was more than likely to be tanned at the Pickens quarter that night.

But the war killed old Asberry Pickens along with hundreds and thousands of other good and useful men. It didn't get him in the thick of the fight, but it got him at last. He hired man to tote his musket and answer the roll when his name was called. And yet it looks like war had marked him for her own. It was maybe six months after the boys furled their flags and grounded their arms at Appomattox before he died, but it stood jam up to reason that war killed him. It killed him with bad luck and hard times.

From that fine spring morning when old Asberry woke up and found his ginhouse burned and his corn-crib sacked and his niggers free, and his mule gone, he was a changed man. He was as different from himself as if he was somebody else entirely. It seems like he lost all interest in the game after that, and he played his hand out fast and quick. He walked over his plantation (one of his niggers had rode off on his saddle horse), and when he got back to the house he had the general appearance of a man that had come to stay. He pulled a big chair up to one corner of the fire-place, and then took a seat and set down to die.

From that time on he never stirred a stump nor moved a peg. Day in and day out he stuck to his corner like a hungry kitten to a pan of milk. He wouldn't do nothin but talk about bad luck and hard times and cuss the Yankee army and the "dam free niggers." His folks thought he might wear it off by and by and recover, but he held to it that he was a gone goslin, and he was.

THE GAME WAS UP.

Most everybody was down in the mouth about the time, but Asberry Pickens had the worst case of it in all this country. He had got his mind made up that it was the last load of poles for him and he wouldn't budge a blame bit.

Things got worse and worse over at the Pickens place, and the neighbor would drop in to talk with old Asberry and try to cheer him up and git him to face the music like a man. They told him he want half as poor and hard run as lots of people. He had his lands and a few scatterin head of cattle left and could soon pull up the hill and git his head above water if he wanted to. He had plenty of sense and was a good manager, and nothin could keep him down if he wanted to climb up. But it was like singin songs to a dead mule to talk in that way to Asberry Pickens.

"I have seen the day when I could go and come as many times as the next man, but the game is up with me now. I can't see any daylight ahead of me, and it ain't no use tryin. I am down flat of my back and nothin can pull me up and give me a new start in the world. My niggers are free and my mules

all gone, and not rations enough on the place to run us through till fall. No, my time is nearly out and my race will soon be run to a finish. My luck has changed and the game runs from me like a shot. The war found Asberry Pickens in the prime of life, and flush with lands and niggers and mules. It has left him a poor and helpless old man. Let him play his hand out now swift and easy, and then pass in the checks and jump the game."

So the neighbors had to give it up and let the old man have his own way. He stuck to his corner close and steady and never was known to leave the house any more till they carried him out feet foremost in the mild and mellow autumn.

A DIFFERENT GAME.

But Hiram Callins played his game different and more in keepin with my notions of what was right. He had fought from first Manassas all the way through the whole entire war. He got wounded three or four times, and come home with the camp fever. His wife had took sick and died the year before, and the enemy had come along and burnt down his home and sifted the ashes. He didn't have a change of clothes to his name, nor even a shelter to sleep under.

What did he do? Nothin in particular the first year. He was too sick and starved out and weak, and it was too late to pitch a crop. He had a mighty good chance to die, and a heap better excuse to play out and let down and give up and quit than Asberry Pickens did. He took up the situation and turned it round and round and over and over till he found a bright side to look at, and then waited for better luck. The next year he leased the Pickens plantation for five years, pulled off his coat and spit in his hands and went to work buildin up the waste places. In three years he had stocked the plantation and married Asberry's widow and started a second crop of Callinses. The last time I was down to the Panther creek range I spent a night with Hiram and his folks, and if I didn't know it in person I never would have thought they had went through the rubs of bad luck and hard times after the war.

Hard times never will kill a man till he loses his nerve and shows his hand and makes up his mind to keel over and go dead.

NEW YEAR RESOLVES.

If it aint too late in the season maybe you would like to go snooks with me in some New Year resolves that I made on the 1st, and which the same was as follows:

1. Resolved, That I will do less cussin and kickin and more workin and thinkin.
2. That I will keep politics out of my religion and religion out of my politics and vote for mother and the baby.
3. That I will make a little more than I spend or break a few traces and let the breechin down a tryin.
4. That I will give all the road to the man with a new plan to run the government and save the country.
5. That I will plant more corn and less cotton one year if it costs the United States another war.
6. That I will work a right smart and sleep a plenty and eat a whole passle.
7. That I will put my trust in the good Lord, and keep my liver movin, and stay young and be happy.
8. That I will never drink a drop of mean whisky as long as I live. Henceforward from now on I must have good whisky or none.
9. That I will pay my honest debts and not make any new ones, and go on tootin my own horn the best I can.
10. That in religion or politics I will show my hand every time I git called. I am too big and fat to ride the top rail this year.
11. That if I never die till hard times kill me I will live a long time.

CHAPTER XXXVI.

A WONDERFUL BOY PREACHER.

You have read and heard a right smart I reckon about boy preachers. Good preachers are the best men in the world and there is nothin the matter with a boy preacher providin in case he comes around on the track when he gits to be a man. Rocky creek has turned out her full share of soldiers and scholars and statesmen and fools and fiddlers ; and she has also give to the church and the state as many boy preachers as any one backwoods settlement in the South.

A POWERFUL HARD CASE.

It was somewhere along in the fifties when Tom Billy Travis turned up for the first time in Rocky creek. He was at that time about 14 years old. He was spare made and hatchet faceted and cotton-headed, but I don't think I ever saw as much pure devilment and cussedness done up in such a little bundle of human flesh.

Tom Billy's father was the Rev. Nathaniel Travis, a hard-shell Baptist preacher that was livin at that time way down in the Flat Woods on Murder creek. A better man than old Nat Travis never cumbered the earth or breathed the breath of life, and he wasn't quite as good as his wife, Aunt Tildy Ann, as we boys always called her. But I have to tell you that Tom Billy was the hardest customer and the wildest buck that ever left a trail in these woods, Now at the time where this piece of history starts in, Deacon Joiner and his wife and daughters were runnin a boardin school in the settlement under the firm name of the High School of Rocky creek. It seems like Tom Billy had bedeviled and pestered the life out of his home folks so till they at last hit on the plan to enter him at the high school and put him in trainin under the Joiner family. You will remember right here that Deacon Joiner was one of these straightlace Presbyte-

rian pillars, and he had the reputation at that time of bein the tightest and toughest schoolmaster in this country.

When old Nat Travis brought Tom Billy to the schoolhouse he took Deacon Joiner to one side and gave him the straight facts in the case.

THE FATHER'S STATEMENT.

"That boy of ours is a positive heaviness to his mother and a constant weight of sorrow to his old father, deacon," says he. "He is our son, it is true, and the first born at that, but I will tell you now that he is a scapegoat and a rascal from the top of his tangley head to the soles of his wayward feet. I have labored with him and prayed for him and wept over him till it aint no use. We have decided that maybe a change of surroundings might bring him to his senses and I have brought him to you. We want you to take him and handle him and train him up like he was your own boy. You would better put the check rein up tolerable tight and buckle the harness on close right at the start. If you let him have his head for a minnit the next thing you know he will take the bit in his teeth and break away and fly the track. Bring him to his knittin as soon as you can and then hold him to it steady and constant. You needn't to be so very sparin with your elbow grease and hickory oil. It aint much probable that you can give him any big pile of book learnin or put any sort of religious notions into his head, but I want you to take that wire edge off if you have to work him and punish him till you bring him to a cold sweat and make the blood trickle from his heels."

Deacon Joiner said he would take the boy and do the very best he could with him. He had been honored with the trainin of many boys, and mostly bad ones at that, and if he didn't make a man out of Tom Billy, it wouldn't be no use for anybody else to try. What he didn't know about breakin and trainin a healthy boy want worth learnin.

ON THE BROAD ROAD.

Now, I have always maintained that there is a right smart honest devilment wrapped up in every boy's hide, and about the only way to keep it down would be to hang the boy. I have

also noticed that most of the bad boys come up to the scratch in the run of time and make good men and honest citizens. But at that time I never would have thought anything good could have ever come out of Tom Billy Travis. His match for meanness never has been heard of around Rocky creek. At school he generally managed to have tolerable good lessons, but if he studied his books any nobody could ever catch him at it. It looks like he must of got his lessons at night, or either picked up what he needed from the other scholars. At the schoolhouse he was forever and eternally into some devilment. He played pranks on the other boys and girls, and every now and occasionally he would try his hand on the deacon and his daughters. He got on the average of from three to six lickins every day that the good Lord sent, but he said he had got usened to that at home. He said the old man whipped him so much till along in the spring of the year he would have to shed his skin like a snake. But all the care and work and trainin that the deacon could give Tom Billy didn't tame his reckless spirit or break his speed or change his wayward gait.

A PREACHER IN THE BUD.

Deacon Joiner and the old lady and the girls used to try their level best to get Tom Billy off to church on Sunday, but he would always give it out that he come from good old school Baptist stock and he want goin to church till the spirit moved him. The cold facts in the case was that Tom Billy wanted to stay at home on Sunday and "have fun," as he called it, with the little niggers on the plantation. He put up as much devilment as any ten common boys durin the week, and yet at the same time he would throw in a little on Sunday for good measure.

After the old folks and the girls got off to meetin, he would go forth to conquer new games and work up somethin fresh in the way of devilment.

By this time the deacon had worked and worried along with Tom Billy till he was about ready to throw up the job. At last he told his old lady that he was goin to try a new plan with the boy. He had talked and talked with him, and flogged and

flogged till it was a plum waste of time and breath and strength. Now his plan was to spare the strap and trust the boy to providence. He was goin to take down the check rein and give him his head and let him have all the slack he wanted. If that plan didnt work out right, then he would have to give the boy up and send him back to his folks.

Well of course Tom Billy then went on from bad to worse. At home on Sundays he would try his hand at first one thing and then another. He would catch the roosters and roll them in ashes and change their colors so they would fight. He would throw the cats under the bee gums and then watch the lively proceedings. He would git up the calves and yoke them in and drive around in his truck wagon. Sometimes he would round up a drove of little niggers and work up a few prize fights with ginger cakes for the winners. He wouldn't play the same game over and over. He had to have somethin new and fresh every Sunday to suit his restless spirit.

One Sunday when he had about run out of material for his meanness he took up a notion that he would carry on a singin match with the niggers. So he got him a hymn book and put out down to the quarters and told the crowd what he had come for. You know niggers are nothin if not niggers, and they were all powerful well pleased with Tom Billy's new move. He got upon a woodpile and went to givin out hymns and raisin the tunes. He had a bully voice of his own and it want long before he had every nigger, big, little, old and young, herded around the woodpile takin stock in the singin school. When Deacon Joiner and his folks come home from church Tom Billy and the niggers was fairly makin the woods ring with that good old song commencin:

" How beauteous are their feet
Who stand on Zion's Hill,"

THEY ALL LIKED IT.

In conclusion Tom Billy got up and give it out that the meetin would hold forth at the same place that evenin at 4 o'clock. At the dinner table that day he told the deacon that he was teachin a singin school for the niggers and asked the old man if he couldn't be on hand at the meetin that evenin. The deacon

promised that he would go and at the appointed time he was there. Tom Billy and the niggers held forth till sunset, and at the close of the doxology he give it out that he would hold a prayer meetin with his dyin congregation the followin Sunday evenin, and he wanted everybody to be there.

That night the deacon told his old lady how Tom Billy was carryin on with the niggers, and then went on to say :

" But I have done been and made up my mind to give the boy all the rope he wants, and wait to see where he will round up. He cant do harm by singin and prayin with the niggers, and he may do some good by keepin himself out of something worse. He enjoys the fun and the niggers like the excitement, and their singin matches and prayer meetins cant do no harm or hurt nobody that I can see."

So Tom Billy and the deacon and all the niggers held forth in the prayer meetin on the followin Sunday. Tom Billy give out the hymns and called on some of the brethren to lead in the prayers. He made the meetin particular lively by offering two plugs of tobacco to the brother that would pray the loudest prayer, and a red calico dress to the sister that would shout the loudest and jump the highest and faint the quickest.

That was way yonder the biggest meetin that had ever been held at the Joiner quarters, and the crowd would of made mince meat and doll rags out of any man that said a word agin' Tom Billy Travis. The niggers said he was either an angel from above or a devil from below, they didn't know which, but anyhow he could beat the world leadin a singin match or runnin a prayer meetin.

THE GOOD WORK DONE.

When the meeting got ready to break up that evenin Tom Billy give it out that he would hold forth in the big oak grove down below the gin house the comin Sunday. He would like for the members to build a brush arbor and put up plenty of seats. He wanted everybody to be there, as he was goin to preach the gospel truth as best he could, while Deacon Joiner would raise the tunes and the general congregation would do the singin and the prayin.

So on the followin Sunday at the appointed hour Tom Billy

and the deacon was both on hand ; likewise also all the niggers in the quarter and from the neighborin plantations. Tom Billy preached from the followin next :

" He that is unjust, let him be unjust still ; and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still ; and he that is holy, let him be holy."

Of course you wouldnt of thought it, but that bad boy preached a stavin good sermon. Before he got through he had the congregation shoutin and cryin and screamin, and even to Deacon Joiner was laughin the holy laugh. And when Tom Billy give out the doxology and said the benediction he was a changed man. He had been convicted under the power of his own preachin, and from that time on the spirit moved him in the way that he should go. He went home the next week and on the followin Sunday he put his reglar membership in down at old Cool Springs church. Inside of a month he was ordained for the ministry, and he has been preachin forth words of truth and soberness to his people from that day till this. Knowin what that boy went through and seein what he has come to, I never will give a boy up to the dogs and the devil, no matter how wild and bad he is. There is some chance for a boy as long as the breath stays in his body.

Rocky creek has turned out more boy preachers than one, but she never did turn out from one bur a bigger devil or better preacher than Tom Billy Travis.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

RUFUS GOES TO COLLEGE.

To be certainly I believes in education. There is nothin like it and nothin better—exceptin a little more of it. The campaign of education is bound to win in the long run, if not in 1892.

But great is economy, too. There is the winnin card in the farmer's hand. Happy is the man with a head on him big enough to git on the outside of the absorbin question. Savin is a great art. It will beat hard work and close fist and big talk any day in the year and give them three in the game to start on. Economy don't mean for a man to be pizen stingy and selfish, as some folks that don't know no better seems to think. It never did pay a man to run very deep in stinginess.

Old man Zeke Strickle, that used to live down on Bear creek, was about the stingiest man I ever had the hard luck to run up with. He used to run a little old water mill down on the creek, and in the summer time when the water was runnin low he would get his drinkin water below the dam and spit and pour the slops in the pond above the mill to keep up his head of water. And he used to go around and climb over the back fence to keep from openin the front gate and wearin out the hinges.

But old Zeke lived hard and died poor. He was stingy enough, but he didnt know nothin about economy. Real genuine economy is a mighty good thing for a man to have in his business. Every man ought to be savin—savin with his money, savin with his talk, savin with everything. I was always a great hand for cuttin across lots. It's about the easiest and quickest way to get there.

FOR INSTANCE.

Me and Tom Dick Simkins was boys together in our growin up. We was born on the same day and on adjoinin farms, and came up neck and neck together. Tom Dick's ma used to say we was as thick as four in a bed, and I reckon she knowed what

that meant. We played in the same sand bed, waded in the same branch, rode the same flyin jenny; went fishin and played marbles and raided neighboring orchards together. We came mighty nigh bein twins, and when I want at Tom Dick's house he was at our house.

But I was always lookin ahead and thinkin the time was comin when we would git to a fork in the road—a time for partin of the ways. And it was even so. After we got up in our teens past the quarter-pole, the turn come. The same blanket wouldnt cover both of us any longer.

Tom Dick was powerful quick and smart in books. His folks said he was a genius, whatever that is. He was apt-headed and bright and always breakin out in a fresh pace. Jerushy, how he could make poetry, say speeches and quote scripture! Well, old man Simpkins he was most tickled to death, and he says how he was goin to give Tom Dick full swing and the best education the country would afford. After a while he would be the greatest man in the settlement, and then he could be a governor, or a president, or maybe a general. We went to school together over at the Cross Roads, and there's where the partin of the ways comes in. I couldn't hold Tom Dick a light in the books. I didn't fly the track any, bnt he jest run away from me like a quarter horse.

Bye and bye Tom Dick played his hand plum out over at the Cross Roads. He got smarter than the professor, and then the old man fixes him up to go off to college.

Now my good old father was like a heap of folks you know—poor, but proud and high spirited. He had been keepin the run of things, and hearin that old man Simpkins was goin to send Tom Dick off to college, he took me down to the horse lot soon one mornin and had a plain family talk with me.

STILL IN THE RACE.

“Your old daddy is proud of you, Ruf,” says he, “and its mighty hurtin to me that Sol Simpkinses boy Tom Dick has got ahead of you in this race. I know he is some lengths ahead now, but it seems to me you mought pull up on him a little if you'll come down to your knittin right and untie your legs and

use em for all they are worth. It's a race for blood, Ruf, it's a race for blood ; and it would break your old mother's heart and bring your daddy's gray head in sorrow to the grave to see the distance flag flutter and flop down right in your face. You've got a head on your shoulders as long as a flour barrel, and if there aint some sense in it there ought to be. Brains runs in the Sanders family. Now I want you to brush up and go to college and let folks know there is somethin in you. You mustn't throw up your tail like a bellused horse before you reach the second quarter pole. Our family standin is at stake. Remember that, Ruf, and if you can't win the race you can make the race track devilish dusty for old Sol Simpkinses boy."

Father said he had about \$300 saved up, and he was plum willing to spend every cent on me to hold up the family reputation. I told him if nothin else would suit him I was willin to stay in the race, but at the same time I was leanin to the opinion that he was placin his money on a short horse with mighty little show for haulin it in again. I knowed I had the stayin powers, but the trouble was I stayed in the same place too long. I didn't have any bursts of speed worth mentionin. And I knowed Tom Dick was runnin like a shot out of a cannon. He was speedy and it seems like he was going to show up considerable stayin qualities, too.

OFF TO COLLEGE.

That fall the old folks fixed me and Tom Dick up and sent us off to college. I went away feelin like a 3-year-old, shod all around. But I didn't know anything about the lay of the land ahead of us. I was just goin it blind and trustin to my nigger luck to pull me through.

But it want long before I found out that things was not runnin to suit me at the college. The sundry and divers rules and regulations didn't set very well on the stomach of a plain, blunt country boy. We had to stay in most of the time and wear uniform coats and pants and brass buttons, and collars that stood up like a whitewashed fence around a country graveyard. We had to set up as straight as sticks, and rear back when we walked and come up clean and fresh and smilin every mornin. My col-

lar was so blame high and hard till I had to go out and climb upon the back fence to spit. Tom Dick he took to sich things like a fish to water, but I didnt. I was too big and clumsy, and too fur behind the other boys. I couldn't learn my lessons for thinkin about my clothes and fancy fixments. I was too durn busy playin soldier. But it didnt take me more than a couple of weeks to learn somethin. I learned that I want built for college. My shape was dead agin me there. So, without wastin any time, I went to the president and told him that I had about made up my mind to throw down my hand and jump the game. I told him, moreover, that I didn't want to be fired out bodily, but like for him to give me a furlough for a few days. I wanted to go home and see father and have a talk with him, and if he insisted on my stayin in the race to the finish I would report for duty the next Monday. I felt like I was wastin a heap of good time and right smart of the old gentleman's money, and I wanted to see him face to face and tell him like an honest boy exactly how the race was goin.

IT WAS A GO.

The president of the college agreed with me in general and particular.

"Tell your fater that I say it might be well enough for him to take your advice in this matter," says he. "I'm bound to think you've got some good material in you, Sanders, but it must be runnin in a sort of under current. It don't show up much on the surface. You are a well meanin honest boy, but ruther a slow team in books. Wisdom crieth aloud, she uttereth her voice in the streets, but it seems like you havent caught the step or got into the procession yet. You can make a first rate farmer out of yourself, and you may get to be justice of the peace in your beat. But you can do all that without a college education, which I fear, though it pains me to say it, would be quite too rich for your young and untamed blood. You may make a good judge of whisky and horses, but I dont think you will ever burn up anybody's mill pond, nor either go to congress."

I thanks the president for his kind and flatterin' words and boarded the next stage coach home.

ANOTHER FAMILY TALK.

When I rounds up at home ruther sudden and onexpected like the old gentleman and mother was both astonished considerable, but seems like they were certain glad to see me. After supper the family circle was formed around the old fireplace, and I feels at home and glad enough to hug anything in sight. Father asked me how things was comin at the college, and then we had another family talk, wherein I done most of the talkin.

"Father," says I, "its no use. I felt like you was placin your money on a loser when we first went on the track, and now I know it dead certain. I ain't been doin nothin at college but wastin my valuable time and your good money. I cant be a soldier and a scholar and a dude all at the same time. I wasnt built for the business. I'm no genius, as Tom Dick Simpkins is, but that ain't my fault. Maybe you wouldn't count me in as a slouch for straight, hard work and plain ploddin, but when it comes to these intellectual spurts and high flyin and fireworks I simply aint in it. I'm jest plain Rufus Sanders, with a big R and a big S, and that's all. I aint fit to be guvnor or a president or a general or a professor or a lawyer or a doctor, and we've got to brace up and look the sober, solemn truth right square in the face. The president of the college seems to think it would take a surgical operation to put a college education into my head, and if I got it there it wouldnt be of much use to me here on the old farm. Reckon he knows his game. Comin right down to business and brass tacks, father, it is all vanity for you to keep tryin to make somethin fine out of your onhappy boy. Jest give me say \$200 and let me have some land and I'll buy a pair of good mules and go to work here on my native stompin ground. I want to play at a game wherein I knows all the pints. It aint much probable that you'll ever have a son in congress, but durn my buttons if I dont be a farmer from Farmersville."

Father said he reckons I was about three-thirds right, and it would have to be jest so, but it stuck in his craw powerful to think that old Sol Simpkinses boy had won the race in a canter as it were, when his first and only begotten and dearly beloved Rufus was among the entries. Mother she puts in there and

said she'd lay that Simpkins boy want a bit smarter than me. But he had a heap more brass, and that was puttin him through. She lowed I was as good and promisin as anybody's son, and said how it wouldnt surprise her to see Tom Dick go to pieces and turn out bad yet. He was too snipshus and Smart Alecky, anyhow.

"I knows you to be a good, honest boy, peart and quick motioned, Ruf," father went on to say. "And I'm plum willin to let you play the game henceforwards to suit yourself. Pick your land and buy your mules and I'll foot the bill."

THE NATURAL RESULT.

You can bet your whiskers I was about the proudest boy in the settlement then. I shucked my college clothes and spit on my hands and sails right into farmin on my own hook. I bought the handsomest pair of mules that ever came to these parts. The next year I made a good crop and had some money in the clear. Blamed if I haven't made more money most every year and now everything on the old farm belongs to Rufus Sanders in his own name.

So I say it don't take a college education to run a good average farm. I am getting along as well as the farmer that has been through college, and a heap sight better than lots of them.

No, Tom Dick never got to be a guvner, or a president, or a general, or any of them things. He was a genius, a regular jack at all trades and good at nothin. It makes me real sad to talk about it, but mother was dead right. Tom Dick won the race easy and then went all to smash. He shot up like a sky-rocket and then come down like a spent bullet. He wore fine clothes and read law and drunk whisky and made poetry and rolled high and spent his daddy's money like water runnin down hill. But he never did stack up any worth mentioning. He got away with all the money the old folks had saved up, and after they died he runs through with the old place like a dost of salts. When he got married he hit me for \$50 to buy his weddin clothes, and got it, too. Poor Tom Dick, with all his weak pints, somehow I liked him.

The last time I saw him he was lookin tolerable sorry and

seedy and shabby, and he told me he was still playin to mighty poor luck.

Tom Dick was always a likely lad, and smart as a steel trap, but it seems like the cards was cut straight agin him.

Genius is a very good thing, I reckon, for a man thats got plenty of money and time to keep it up, but it wont pay the feed bill nor buy a new frock for the baby.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

OLD MAN SANDY AND THE BABY.

"Bob Cowlin's girl baby was the leadin hero in the biggest and most ugliest family scrap that has happened in the Panther creek country this year, or in any other country as for that," says Aunt Nancy Newton to the Sanders family one day last week. "It was one of those bloody and sudden tragediums that sometimes swoops down on a settlement like a thunder clap from a summer sky," she went on. "It opened out with one funeral and wound up with another, and come plaged nigh runnin the number up to three. Dandy Dick Perkins acted the yaller dog with the Cowlin family, and when it come to a pinch old Sandy Cowlin give him about the same showin he would give to a mangy dog in his meat house. It looks like Dandy Dick must of forgot that old man Sandy kept a breech loadin shot gun around home and want skeered to pull the trigger, whereas a funeral procession moved out to the settlement graveyard with Dandy Dick ridin at the head of it flat of his back.

A LONG SAD STORY.

"It is a long, sad story, and I dont like much to be givin it away outside of the family, but everybody, white and black, big and little, young and old, in all the country borderin around Panther creek knows it already and there cant be no harm in tellin it to you as it has been told to me.

"Of course you remember Bob Cowlin, though he want nothin but a strip of a boy when you all left the settlement and moved up to Rocky. You know Bob was the only son and the only child of old Sandy Cowlin. Naturally he was the pet of the old man and was tolerably bad spiled in his raisin. Old Sandy had a good plantation and plenty of money, but he didnt have nothin Bob couldnt git for the askin. Of all the youngsters in that country Bob Cowlin was famous for wearin the finest clothes and drivin the fastest horses and neatest buggies and

spendin the most money in havin a good time. He was a little wild, but good-hearted and harmless. He stood in well with the people generally and was the general all-round favorite with all the girls and boys.

"Well, by and by, as time went on, old Sandy sent Bob off to college, and after stayin away a year or two he come back all diked up and finished off as a gentleman and a scholar. But when he come home he was the same Bob Cowlin so far as I could see, exceptin that he put on a few more fine clothes and cut a little higher dash at the picnics and parties and other social gatherins.

"Then it want very long before it got to leakin out in a round-about way that Bob had fell in love with a city girl and would soon be bringin her home as his side partner for life, for bad or for worse ; and from what come to pass after that it looks a right smart like it was all for worse. They got married along in the early fall of the year, and Bob brought his bride home behind a pair of spankin bay horses and in a fine top buggy, with yaller spokes and runnin gear. So they then settled down at old man Sandy's house, and everything went along smooth and easy and nice as you please till it got time for them to settle up. And it want very long before the time come.

"You know Bob had been flyin so high and fast and swimmin so deep and weedin such a wide and reckless row till he was now all broke up and broke down in the flesh, and it didnt take his town wife long to break him down in the spirit. She didnt git along much with Bob's friends and family and they didnt git along much with her. She didnt take to country ways and country folks, and the folks didnt take to her any worth mentionin. She wanted to pull up and move off to the city, but Bob was too weakly and punylike by that time to make a livin for anybody and he knowed good and well that it would be more safer and better for him to hang around home and stick tolerable clost to the old lick log. So he says how they couldnt go to the city to stay, and his wife nagged and jawed and pecked and stewed and cried at him day in and day out.

"Well, time passed on kinder rocky and rickety-rackety like till the spring of last year, and a fine girl baby come down

to bless that unhappy union. It was a gracious gift that ought to of smoothed out all the rough places in the road of life and made them happy as the sunshine itself. And it did help Bob up powerful to think of his girl baby, which he naturally thought was the only one in the whole entire country. But it want so with his wife. She was sick abed with the city fever, and it seems like there was nothin on the earth or under it that would cool her off. And at the same time Bob was growin worse and worse day by day. His case at last run into consumption and in the early summer of this present year he passed away into some other and better country.

TO TOWN SHE WENT.

"But I am gettin ahead of myself with the story. I must go back and tell you that a month or two before poor Bob died his city wife packed up her duds and went off to the city to see her folks, as she put it, and it looks like when she got there her spell of the town fever got worse and more of it instead of better, and she couldnt git off and go back where she belonged—the dyin bed of her husband. And that want all by a heap sight. Their little girl was somethin better than a year old by now and Bob's wife, instid of takin her along like she ought to when she went back to the city, left her there in the country, so old man Sandy and his good wife had to take care of both Bob and the baby, and Bob in the last stages of a general kerflumux at that.

"Still, with all her faults and meanness, Bob was a fool about his wife, and the triflin way she acted with him only hurried on the time for him to give up and go. He use to write to her, or either git somebody else to write for him, every week and beg her to come and see him and the baby before it was everlastinly too late. But she didnt come. She was always too unwell, or predisposed, or somethin of that sort, and she could only send love and promise to come down presently.

"Now, when Bob died, if not before, it got out that his wife was flyin around continually all the time with Dandy Dick Perkins, a gay and gaudy young buck that growed up in the old settlement, but moved off to the city and turned out to be a high rollin gambler, and soon give it out that he had money to use

for gun waddin. So you see there was a cat in the meal tub, and after Bob died it didnt wait long about jumpin.

WHO KEEPS THE BABY.

"When poor Bob died he give his baby girl to his father and mother. He didnt have nobody else to give her to and the old folks was glad to take her to sorter heal over the wounds that Bob's bad weddin match and early death had left. On the day that Bob was buried, when the family got back from the graveyard old man Sandy give it out in plain English and no Bible words whatever, that Bob's widder should never darken the doors of his house henceforth and forever. 'She left Bob on his dyin bed, with the baby jest only learnin to walk and went off to the city and stayed there till our only boy is sleepin the last long sleep down under the sod and the daisies,' says old man Sandy, 'and now, goldarn her highferlutin time, she can stay right there. I would ruther not see her any more, cause I mought lose my head and tell her what I think about her.'"

"I don't think it was more than two weeks after Bob Cowlin was laid away—I know the tracks was still plain in the fresh dirt around his grave—when news come down from the city that his wife had done took and married herself off with that ungodly, low-life Dandy Dick Perkins. It want no surprise to me, cause from what I could hear and pick up comin and goin I thought by rights they ought to of run to some fureign country and got married without waitin for Bob to die.

"Then about the next thing anybody knowed here come a letter from Mises Dandy Dick Perkins askin old man Sandy Cowlin to let her take her baby girl to the city and keep her. What did old man Sandy say? You might know that without askin any question. He didnt even answer the note, but he told the boy that brought the note to tell Mises Dandy Dick Perkins to go there herself, or words to that extent. He didnt have nothin now to take the empty place that Bob had left exceptin Bob's baby, and by the eternal jimjams, says he, I am goin to keep her if it brings on another war and breaks up the plan of salvation."

SETTLIN THE QUESTION.

"Everything then moved along beautiful and quiet-like over at the Cowlin place for about a week after that," Aunt Nancy went on, "till one day a fine carriage, with two high headed horses hitched to it and a nigger drivin them, pulled up at the front gate. There was a man and a woman in the carriage. It was Dandy Dick Perkins and his wife, which the same was also Bob Cowlin's widow. She sent word in the house that she wanted to see her baby. She had give up the notion of ever havin the pleasure of keepin her for good but she wanted to look at her and kiss her one more time before leavin forever. Old man Sandy wouldnt so much as go to the door when he found out who was at the gate, but the words the woman sent him touched him somehow in a tender spot, and he sent the nurse out to the gate with the baby.

"In about two minutes the nurse come runnin and screamin back in the house and said how them people had run away with the baby. It seems like as soon as the woman got the baby in the carriage the nigger driver put whip to the horses and away they went back towards the city. When old man Sandy looked around and saw what had come to pass he fairly made the air blue with cuss words, but he want losin no time from his business.

"In less time than it takes me to tell it the old man was mounted on the fastest horse in his lot, with his shotgun layin across his lap, and the horse tearin and plungin down the road towards the city. The runaway carriage had the start, but old man Sandy overhauled the Perkins pair before they got half way to town, told them by all that was good and bad he had come to have Bob's baby, or either a double-barrel funeral. It was the baby or buckshot for two. Dandy Dick lit out of the carriage like he was goin to give the baby up, and then pulled his gun and tried to git the drop on the old man. But he didnt git the drop on nothin but his own candy. He fired one shot, and on the next round old man Sandy opened up with both barrels and dropped him like a beef in his tracks. One load struck him in the head and the other went tearin through his body. People that went there and looked at Dandy Dick before the coroner

come to move him give it up that he was the worst killed man they had ever heard tell of.

"In the general confusionment a stray shot hit the double widow in the arm, but she was still able and more than willin to give up the baby and let the nigger drive her on back to the city as fast as he could.

"Old man Sandy came ridin back home torectly as slow and onconcerned as you please, with Bob's baby girl in his arms and his old breach-loadin shot gun layin across his lap.

"They had a big case up in the courts about it, and a trial and all that, but old Sandy Cowlin come clear, like everybody said he would and ought to. Nobody knows anything about what has ever gone with the widow, and from all I can hear nobody wants to learn.

"But Bob Cowlin's baby girl is still livin over there with old man Sandy as healthy as a pig and as pritty as a picture."

CHAPTER XXXIX.

RUFUS BELIEVES IN LUCK.

Everybody to their own notion, as the old woman said when she kissed the cow, but as for me I believes in luck. There is good luck, and bad luck, and fisherman's luck, and hard luck, and nigger luck, and no luck at all.

Sometimes a man strikes the whole layout—every card in the pack, as it were—before he plays the game out. Luck is somethin that comes and goes, and you know not the whenceness nor the whither thereof. It may be born with a man and then show up as runnin dead square agin him at the finish. It may stop and stay with him, and then again it may hit the grit and skip out and skeedaddle. You simply cant sometimes always tell.

A FEW LUCK SIGNS.

Many and many a man would git along a heap more smoothen and easier like in this vale of years and tears if he only but knowed the signs of good and bad luck.

It is bad luck to pick up a pin unless the pint pints at you.

It is bad luck to start a piece of work or to move your washin on a Friday, unless you can round it up on the same day.

It is bad luck for a rabbit to run across the road ahead of you—particlar a graveyard rabbit.

It is bad luck to turn your buggy wheel or wagon wheel backwards when you are greasin up, cause if you do it is right probable that you will have a break down and a smashup.

It is bad luck to tote a hoe, or ax, or spade, or rake, or any of them things through the house. It means a gravediggin in the settlement.

It is bad luck to dream of crossin muddy water. It means a funeral in the family.

It is bad luck to start somewhere and then turn back, unless you make a cross mark and spit in it.

It is bad luck to cuss in the spring of the year, cause the fish wont bite.

It is bad luck to let little babies look in a lookin glass, cause it will make them cut teeth hard.

It is bad luck to step over babies, cause it will stop them from growin.

It is bad luck to dream of a weddin, cause it means a coffin in the house.

It is bad luck to kill a frog, cause it makes the cows go dry.

HE'S A LUCKY DOG.

I have always been what you might call a lucky dog. My old black mammy use to tell me it was because I was born durin the dark nights of August. Maybe so, maybe so. But anyhow, good luck has been one of my strong points all along. It has stuck to me same like a brother through childhood and boyhood and maidenhood and manhood, and I am like Richard of old, nothin if not lucky.

Sometimes it looks like my luck has gone dead broke and the game is runnin the wrong way, but if I keep my vest pulled down and my upper lip stiff everything comes out for the best. The poet of old, lookin down through the long and dusty lanes of time, said "that all things come around right side up with care to the man that works and waits," and it is my prevalent opinion that the poet was about three-thirds right. Whereas, I makes it a rule to work and wait a plenty, and I find that is about the safest way to cut the cards, particlar if you are playin at a long game.

The last time I was in town a fine lady comes out to my spring wagon to see what I had to sell. While she was lookin around at the layout and pricin things she got up a sort of a runnin conversation.

"Aint this Mr. Sanders?" says she.

"Thats what they call me down in the settlement," says I.

"Seems to me like I have seen your face somewhere before," she goes on. "Who was your mother?"

"My mother was old Mrs. Sanders," says I, "the wife of

Rev. Wm. Sanders, one of the first settlers, that use to keep a stage stand over on the old stage road."

She says she believes she would take 50 cents worth of pears and a peck of wild plums for makin preserves. While I was measurin up the plums and countin out the pears she went on :

" I have heard a heap about you in the papers and I am real glad to meet you in the flesh. You look so healthy and happy. Dont you never git sick nor solemcholy about nothin ?"

" Not much, if any," says I. " We have got plenty to eat and drink and plenty of time to sleep out to my house. I use sound tobacco and good whisky, or nothin, put my trust in Providence and vote the straight ticket every clatter. Aint that enough to keep a man honest and virtuous and healthy and happy ?"

She said she reckons it was, and she believes she would take two fresh watermelons and a nice mushmelon for Sunday.

" Mr. Sanders," says she, " they tell me that you have got about the smartest and handsomest wife in your end of the county. How did you manage that ?"

" Madam," says I, as I crawled back on the wagon and picks up the ribbons, " I managed that just as easy as fallin off a greased log. It want my good looks, nor money, nor family reputation. It was my winnin ways, commandin appearance and nigger luck. Good mornin, mam."

SLIM JIM BLEVINS.

Now Slim Jim Blevins, that use to live over on the ridge and tried to run a farm down in the swamp lands of Indian creek was about the most onluckiest dog that ever had his day in our neck of the woods. Seems like he had worse luck and more of it than me and all my family put together.

I reckon he must have been born on a Friday or either in the last change of the moon, and it looks like the dice was loaded and the cards was stacked straight agin him all the time. He was smart as a steel trap and sprightly and likely enough, but somehow or somehow else he never did have nothin but

bad luck and a whole passle of it. Every throw was a loser and every game was a freeze-out to Slim Jim.

By jiminy, he couldnt even play marbles if there was any gamblin in the game. When we was all school boys together and sweepstakes was all the go, Slim Jim had to buy a new stock of marbles every Monday mornin and by the next Saturday evenin he wouldnt have a single stake left. He could shoot as hard and true as the best of us in a game for pure pastime, but as soon as ever we started in to playin for keeps his luck would break away from him like a quarter horse.

Another piece of Slim Jim's sorry luck was that he couldn't carry much liquor around with him. He couldnt fool along with vegetable matter much without comin up drunk. He could git tanked up and blind drunk the easiest and quickest and the cheapest of any man I ever run up with in all my life. It looks to me like if you was to hit him right hard in a soft place with a sour mash or rotten apple it would give him the tanglefoot and the blind staggers. My notion is that a man that cant tote a right smart liquor and handle it gracefully ought to let it alone and leave it over for the fellow that can. But Slim Jim never would play the game that away.

TOO MANY VOICES.

When Slim Jim was growin up he was onlucky in his talkin machinery. He had too blame many voices. He would say one word in a deep bass voice, and maybe the next one would come out in alto, or tenor, or treble, or something of that sort. He couldn't talk two minutes without strikin all the strings and soundin all the keys and blowin all the notes. One day he was goin to mill in the family oxcart. It was hot summer weather and his steers would make a wild stampede for every creek and branch and shady place along the road. Torectly they run the wagon upon a steep bank and turned it upside down. Slim Jim landed under the wagon body in the middle of the road, and the steers stood still in a cosy and shady place.

About that time old man Tommy Pickens comes along. He noticed the general smash up in the big road and hears a monstrous racket goin on under the wagon body, so he got down to

see what had happened and lend a helpin hand if it was needed. Slim Jim was now hollerin at the top of his voice for help. But his voice was his weak pint and it got old Tommy tolerable mixed and muddled. Sounds like he heard a big man with a bass-drum bumble-bee voice, then a little man with a fine voice for singin tenor, then a yearlin boy with a bully voice for drinkin butter milk and callin pigs, and then an old man with a whole passel of cracks and crooks and snatches and patches in his voice.

The old man stood there and heard the concert through a few stanzas, and it seems like he got mad about somethin.

"If I aint drunk nor gone crazy," says he, "there's about six or half a dozen of you under that old wagin body now, and if all of you put together cant turn it over and get out I'll be dadblamed if you cant stay right there till the crack of dooms-day."

Then he mounted his nag and left poor Slim Jim pinned down under the wagon body to sweat and cuss and holler for help till way late in the evenin, when somebody that knowed his weak pints come along and got him out.

WORSE AND MORE OF IT.

About the only thing that ever happened to Slim Jim that even had the appearment of good luck was when he took and got married. He took Rosanna Milligan, and she was a spankin handsome girl, and as good and sweet as she was pritty.

They got married like this summer and along in the fall of next year the doctor comes around on his quarterly circuit and left a right little baby at their house. But Rosanna was taken very sick and she never did get well any more. After she died the Lord took the baby too, seein how, I reckon, that the little one would be better off maybe with its mother.

After all it was bad luck and lots of it to down Slim Jim. A true and wifely little woman kept him sober one year, and he worked hard and made a tolerable good crop for the first and last time in his life. But when she was gone away he goes in deeper and deeper on mean liquor, and it want many moons till he run slap out to the end of his rope. Mother she says the

Lord will provide and do what is best for his people, and I aint doubtin that for a minit. But the whole entire settlement wondered with sorrow when Rosanna had to go, cause if there ever was a poor devil in this world that needed the smiles and tears and prayers of a good and womanly wife, I believe in my soul that his name was Slim Jim Blevins.

THE GENTLEMAN LOSES.

"The gentleman loses and the gamblers win."

That was a great sayin with Slim Jim. It dont make any difference what sort of a game he was playin at, when bad luck broke him up and the other fellows scooped in the pile, he would bow his head and smile a gentle, painful lookin smile and say :

"The gentleman loses and the gamblers win."

It was all right for Slim Jim to say that. The boys all knowed him, and we was all willin for him to git all the comfort he could out of it in that way.

But bye and bye bad luck comes to him on a small pint like that. Over at the Cross Roads one day he got into a little game of cards with three strangers that was travelin around the country as agents for a lightin rod concern, but they turned out to be second-class tin-horn gamblers, and a terrible tough set at that. In little or no time they had sized up Slim Jim's pile and put it in their pockets. They was playin three agin one, and it was a dead easy, open and shut game. Seein that he had dropped his package, as usual, Slim Jim got up and bowed his head and smiled accordin to his old habit, and said says he :

"The gentleman loses and the gamblers win."

The whole crowd was tolerable mellow with corn juice anyhow, and the lightnin rod fellows fired up and got mighty mad, sayin how they want no gamblers, but travelin sportin men. They cussed and they ripped around considerable, and presently one of them pulls his gun and opens fire on Slim Jim, who showed down and answered the call quick as a flash. Then the firing got more thick and furious till the general crowd scattered and left Slim Jim there to play another hand out with the strangers.

And he played it, too, for all there was in it. He never was known to have any luck, but I always maintains that the man that took his popgun and went out to shoot Slim Jim Blevins for a coward would be makin a mistake as big as a meetin house. He was a plum failure at cards and he couldnt even play marbles for keeps, but he was dead game clean down to the bone.

So when the firin ceased and the smoke cleared away there was three dead lightnin rod frauds and tin-horn gamblers on the ground, and Slim Jim, when his friends got to him, was also nearin the great divide betwixt the whither and the where. Some of the boys give him a drink of water, whereat he bowed his head and smiled his thanks. Then he caught me by the hand, and pullin me down close to him, he whispers with his dyin breath :

“ The gentleman loses and the gamblers win.”

There was a four-cornered funeral down in our settlement the next day, and every eye was dry exceptin them as shed a few tears for Slim Jim Blevins.

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"RUFUS SANDERS" AND HIS FAMILY.

CHAPTER XL.

THE DECEITFULNESS OF "FIGGERS."

These days I am wanderin most too fur along into the vale of years to make a full hand in the field, so I reads the papers tolerable constant. Every now and occasionally I see where some horny-handed son of a statesman talks out in meetin, and tells the farmers to plant less cotton and more corn and oats and hay and hogs, and sich like. That sounds like good advice on first blush, and it is. But good advice aint goin to run the farm, or pay off the store account, or squash the mortgage. Its too blame plentiful like and cheap. Good advice is about the only thing in this vain and fleetin world that a poor man can git without payin for it. Anybody that wants to can jest lay down and wallow in good advice free gratis for nothin.

The comin statesman can give you the figgers, plain as the nose on your face and put you down in the middle of the big road that leads right on to the land of peace and plenty. But my notion is that when a farmer goes to foolin with figgers he is puttin his mudhooks on powerful slippery ground. The trouble is the figgers dont always come out like they went in. They may stack up in good shape on the start, and then go to smash on the home stretch.

Seems to me like the fellows thats always advisin the farmers how to hold down the government and run their farms are wastin lots of breath and blowin in a heap of precious time, anyhow. They think they know the farmers, but they dont. The ways of the farmer is hard—to find out. I have been runnin with them for three-score years and a goin, and I dont know it all yet. But I am learnin all the time. I learns somethin mighty nigh every day. I have done learned one thing about the farmers, and that is, that we most generally do as we please. We may hold beat meetins in the spring, and build new plat-forms and blaze the way for new reforms and revolutions, and resolute and whereas until the evening stars sing together. But

then when the meetin adjourns and we go home to pitch the crops every feller plays his own hand and plays it to win.

FOOLIN WITH FIGGERS.

I aint been foolin off much time with figgers since way back late along in the seventies. I tried my hand one year and come out way down in the little end of the horn. I figgered myself chin deep in debt, and give the poorhouse a mighty close shave. Since that time I fights shy of figgers, believin as I do that my luck runs in some other turn.

We was farmin then down in the river country and the general outlook was tolerable rosy. Money was easy, prices was runnin way down and the country was briefin up considerable all along the line. There had been a heap of talk among the farmers along in the early spring months about cuttin down the cotton crop so as to thin out the supply, make the demand lively and squeeze the price way up in the fall. That was the schedule accordin to the general understandin, and after feelin around among the neighbors I settles down to thinkin that the farmers was all goin to come to taw, toe the mark like men and stand shoulder to shoulder till the last darned foe retired.

One day I was plowin down in the lower field, breakin up the land the first time and tryin to set my pegs and lay off my plans for the year. Along towards twelve I slowed up in a shady place, unhooked the traces, and hunked down to cool off and give the horses a breathin spell. Next thing I knowed I was thinkin and figgerin and schemin and plannin on the crop. I figgered and figgered and the plow stood still in the furrow till mother blowed the horn and I takes out for dinner, but my pegs was set and my plans for the year was all cut and dried. I figgers it out and makes up my mind to play the game this way :

Everything is runnin to corn and oats and wheat and hay this year. Cotton is barred out as the short horse, with no takers. Now, it strikes me that the short horse is goin to win the race in straight heats. The country is goin to be loaded down with dead oodles of grains when the mild and mellow autumn comes. Cotton will be bringin 15 or 20 cents a pound, and folks will be burnin their cotton for fire wood. Looks like

everything is down on cotton, but the world has got to have it as long as people wear clothes. Blamed if I aint for the under dog in the fight anyhow. Rufus Sanders, you may be a little green and fresh in spots, but you aint nobody's fool. It dont run in the Sanders family. You are runnin this farm for mother and the baby. Play on the short horse. Plant cotton. You've got a dead open and shut game. Play it for all there is in it. Place your money where it will make a safe landin. Play for keeps. Plant cotton.

THE FAMILY CONSULTATION.

At dinner time I lets mother into the game, and told her all about it. My head was done sot accordin to the figgers and I was going to back my judgment agin the world, but I lowed I would feel some better if I knowed she was with me in the spirit, as well as the flesh. She put her dimpled chin down in her pritty hands and listened, quiet and gentle like as a mouse, while I put the figgers and laid down the plans. She didnt toss her head, or kick any, or pull on the bit, but seems to me like she was jest a little skittish. She said it looked as if it might be a good thing, but she didnt fall in as quick and unanimous as I was countin on.

"You are the farmer and the general boss of this concern, Rufus," says she, "and you ought to know a heap better than me. But for all you know, other folks may be thinkin the same way, and if everybody plants nothin but cotton, there will be a general smashup in the fall. It may be a dead open and shut game like you say, and then agin it may be a reglar freeze out."

"But mother," says I, "theres the figgers to show for themselves. They are plain enough for a fool, though blind drunk and a runnin, to read. We'll win the game. Its in the cards, mother; its in the cards. Figgers cant lie."

"I am bound to own up that it looks smooth and all right like you fix it up, but there is many a slippunce betwixt the spring down under the hill and the water shelf at the door. Maybe figgers cant lie, but I lay they can make the truth look powerful sickly and pale around the gills, Rufus. Sposin things dont turn out the way you calculates. Wouldnt we be in a nice mess next fall?"

"There you go, mother," says I, "always a sposin." Then I told her that old yarn about Sallie Sposin. It is a true story, though, and pints a good moral.

SALLIE SPOSIN'S SORROW.

Her right name was Sallie Wiggins, but we boys called her Sallie Sposin for short. She was a bustin big gal, with a leg on her like a \$200 cow, and as ugly as a chop-ax. But the neighbors all said if she want pritty she was mighty good and sweet and a source of comfort to her old mother. Well, to be certainly, Sallie didnt take to marryin much, and bye-and-bye she got to be an old maid and a great hand at sposin.

One day Deacon Joiner had been to town and was comin along home when he runs upon Sallie down at the neighborhood bridge across Deer creek. She was settin on the bridge close to the edge with her feet swingin and danglin over the water, and rockin to and fro, and blubberin and cryin like her heart was broke.

"My dere sister," says the deacon, "what in all the world aileth you?"

"I aint a pesterin you now," says Sallie, "I aint a pesterin nobody. I am tendin to my own business, and sposin—boo hoo hoo."

"But you are cryin so, my sister, and I fain would comfort and console with you," says the deacon.

"I dont want none of your comfortin and consolin," says Sallie. "I dont want nothin. I was only sposin—boo hoo."

"Blessed is them that mourn," says the deacon, "providin theyve got somethin to mourn for. But it were perfect vanity, my dere, dyin sister, to weep and wail for nothin. What in the name of grace and common sense have you been a sposin."

"Well, deacon, if you must know, I reckon I'll have to tell you," says Sallie between her sobs and sighs. "I was jest sposin if I had got married when I was a right young gal—and sposin I had of had some children and they were grown up now—and sposin they had of come down here to play on this bridge—and—and sposin they had of fell off in the creek and got drowned—boo, hoo, hoo."

The deacon he gives the case up as about three times too many for him. But the story soon leaked out in the neighborhood, and after that Sallie Wiggins was Sallie Sposin.

STRIKING A BRACER.

Nevertheless I was feelin sorter jubious and givy after the family consultation. Mother hadnt tumbled in to suit me. But as I was going back to the field that evenin I runs up on Handy Wiggins (that was Sallie Sposin's uncle) and I struck a bracer right there. After passin compliments about the weather and the prospects Handy up and tells me that he has been doin some figgerin for himself and he was goin to play a different game of his own. "Ive been foolin with cotton long enough," says he, "and I am going to give it the clean go by this year. I figgered it out this mornin and made up my mind to let other folks run to cotton if they wants to ; but as for me I am plantin nothin but corn and oats and wheat, hay and potatoes and sich from this time hencewards. We has been makin more cotton than the country needs and cotton is going to drop out of sight next fall. I am layin off to plant all the land I can work in corn, and sow everything else in small grain. Then I'll take take things easy durin the summer, go huntin and fishin a right smart and keep the store account down all I can. Thats my hand and I am goin to play her wide open."

Handy was doin the talkin and I gives him all the rope he wanted, but I keeps up a considerable thinkin all to myself. He was playin right straight to my hand, but it want none of my business to say anything about the "dead cinch" or the "cold deck." So we parted in peace and went on with our farmin operations. He plays the game accordin to his figgers and I plays it by mine. He runs to corn and oats and sich like. I runs to cotton. My farm was on one side of the road and his was on the other side. He put in his crop early, and when I was plantin cotton he was layin by corn. He didnt work much, but he gives his crop a lick and a promise and turns her loose for the summer. Way long in the heat of the summer I was plowin in my cotton, and Handy, he was off huntin and fishin.

I was holdin a big hand and it kept me busy as forty thousand bees in a tar bucket.

Now that was the biggest crop year in the history of the state. It was a year of plenty and some to spare. Everything was on the make, from corn and cotton and pumpkins to may-pops and blackberries. My cotton shows up bloomin and blossomin like a nest of roses durin the summer, and along early in the fall blame my cats if it didnt look like the whole field, leaves, stalks and all, was gettin white and turnin to cotton. And Handy's corn and other grain crops turned out bully. Seems like we was both playin to big luck, but thinks I to myself, Handy is playin for a naked livin, and I am out for the stuff in cold cash.

Along in August Handy comes up and sails in to save his fodder. One day I was out walkin around and watchin the big cotton bolls belly out and bust open when I runs up with Handy, lookin like the banks was all busted. But we passed a few words and then climbed up on the cross-fence to swap lies a few rounds.

"Handy," says I, "corn is goin to be so cheap next winter that a nigger wouldnt steal it."

"Theres where you are spillin your molasses," says Handy. "Corns goin to be skeerce as hen's teeth and the price is goin to shoot up like a kite."

"Now Handy," says I, "lets play the game dead square. Your bluffin aint goin to jar my hand narry bit."

"Everybody in this country is raisin cotton but me," said Handy.

"Everybody in Texas is raisin corn but me," says I. "Corns goin to be some cheaper than firewood, though if you are after disposin of a few tons of your crop for the gatherin, I'll take some offen your hands on them terms."

"No you wont, neither," says Handy. "I wouldnt swap corn for cotton even steven, pound for pound. Hay and fodder is a heap better than cotton for beddin stock and I wouldnt have no other use for it. You cant sell cotton next fall and it wont be worth the pickin."

"I'm considerable of liar myself, Handy, but I aint no

match for you. If there's any rag on the bush you can take it," says I.

AT THE FINISH.

So along in the closin days of August I gits things to movin up lively, and snatches out three bales of cotton, drawin on mother's savins to pay for the pickin. One night I loaded the wagon with the three bales and at the crack of day I shoves out for the city to feel of the market. I didnt travel many miles before somethin a blasted sight worse than the market was feelin of me. It started in like a slow fever and wound up like a double-jinted buck ager. I reckon it must have been a cross between the high lifts and the eternal jimjams.

Durned if Handy Wiggins want plum right and I was dead wrong. The whole country was runnin to cotton. There was cotton fields on the right, and cotton fields on the left, cotton fore and cotton aft. Seems like everybody had been plantin by my figgers. When I got to town they told me that the first bale had been comin in pritty reglar and numerous for three weeks past. The warehouses was full of cotton, and the streets were fillin up with it. Jeminy Christmas! at the cotton! at the cotton!! at the cotton!!!

They told me the market was dull and still a dullin, so I sells out cheap and pulls for home. As the season come on the price of cotton took a header and went down to rock bottom, and the price of corn went up like a cat's back. I picked out what I could up to Christmas, sold it dirt cheap and let the rest rot in the field.

Handy Wiggins made cords of money that year and bought up another eighty acres. He loaned me enough corn to pull through with the next crop, and by living on blackberry pies and branch water mostly for several summers me and mother and the baby finally come around in shape again and saved the farm by a scratch. I found out that bettin on the short horse agin the field was monstrous risky business, particular if the backin was oncertain.

There was an old farmer down in our settlement on that golden Indian summer who had the appearment of one that was

saunt for and couldnt go. He moped around lookin like the ragged edges of ruination. He felt like he had been chawed up by some old cow and dropped over a fifty-foot bluff. He was strapped, and crushed, and cast down, and kerflummuxed.

What was the matter with him you reckon? The man and the ceilin had met. He had been foolin with figgers, and his name was Rufus Sanders.

CHAPTER XLI.

ON HUCKLEBERRY RIDGE.

Stories I have told now and then—stories on top of stories—but if my remembrance ain't dead wrong I never did tell you Brit Foster's Christmas story in regards to his little steer by the name of Brindle, his red leather shoes and his long-tail Winchester coat. Many and many's the time I have heard Brit tell that story, which at the same time, you understand, it was the unwashed truth—and I have laughed and laughed till by it was "a passle of most hellatious sad and solemcholy facts in history."

"THE MAN AND THE SURROUNDINS MET."

I have heard Brit Foster tell that story of his so frequent and exactly—on the goods box at the Cross Roads along in the summer, and around some warm and pleasant fireplace of winter nights, till blamed if I don't know the whole entire thing off hand by heart.

Hit was way out there in the Pan Handle country of Texas, in a town by the name of Vernon, where me and Brit met up together the last time in this vain and fleetin world below. Seven long years had then come and went since me and him had shook hands acrost the bloody chasm of the past. There was a warm and hardy "howdy Rufe" and "howdy Brit," and that night when we fell in with the town gang around a blazin good fire in the back room—all hands braced up to about six bits in the dollar and mellow onto the occasion—I lowed to Brit that the man and the surroundins had met onest more—that the day and hour had now come for him to tell them Texas fellows about the sad and terrible Christmas which he had spent one time back in the states indurin of our young and better days. Well, as usual, Brit pulled on the bits considerable, but under the general pressure of the surroundin circumference he finally at last give in and come forth with that famous chapter from our local history.

"TREMENDIUS SAD WHEREFORES."

"Hits been so monstrous long ago, Rufe, and the whence-ness and wherefores thereof are so tremendius sad unto my wanderin thoughts till durned if I don't raley hate to tell the truth whilst history repeats herself. Hit was the ups and downs, the trials and tribulations of that orful day, Rufe, which driv me away from the old home where I spent the golden days of boyhood. Hit was the scandalous scrape brung down on me by that little scrub steer of mine Brindle, them red leather shoes and that infernal long tail coat, which took me as a green and tender boy, fresh from the woods and hills—with the dew drops and the hayseed in my hair—throwed me out into the cold world alone, and made me what you see and what I am to-night—a gambler which has bet his pile on two pair, queens up, as it were, whilst the other man helt four aces or a straight flush."

And by this time Brit's face was as long as a rainy Sunday, whilst the tears backed up in his eyes till blamed if they didnt look like two glass marbles. Raley and truly I did mortally hate to make him go on with the proceedins, but the day and hour had come oncst more, and so Brit he told the story.

"OVER ON HUCKLEBERRY RIDGE."

"You must recollect, Rufe, that in them plain old days some of God's own people lived right down there in the Panther creek settlement. Most in generally speakin they belonged to the old school Baptists—God fearin, debt payin, dram drinkin, democratic people. But they were pore, Rufe, most hellatious pore,—which I always did maintain they didnt mean no harm by that. And let me tell you, fellow citizens, money was money then and it took some tall scratchin and starvin stintin to pay off the feed bills and keep up with the store account. Consequentially, as you no doubts recollect, Rufe, in our young and gallin days the wherewithals and raiments with which I clothed my awkward body were the plainest and but blame few at that. Now I can remember the skeerce and scanty manner of my dress the same as if it was but only yesterday. Honest to God,

fellow citizens, I was passin out from boyhood into manhood with whiskers sproutin on my face and women bearin on my mind before I ever climbed up on the inside of a full suit of clothes. In the summertime I had to wear a long tail homespun shirt, and in the winter it was that same long tail shirt spliced out below with a pair of wool socks to keep my wayward feet from freezin slap off.

“ But finally at last I was feelin my oats so promiscus and plentiful till nothin would do but I must go out amongst the female generation. In the main time old man Larry Benton was livin over there on Huckleberry Ridge and raisin of a tremendius large and lovely crop of girls. And it did look to me like of all the places in a discovered world for a youngster to go and have a high heel good time that was the mainest place. But from that bright day down unto this blessed hour, so fur as anybody knows, I never have been caught foolin and fumblin around with a passle of gay and gorgeous girls. By gatlins, I give em all the road now till they git broke and bridle wise and quit pullin on the bit. Anyhow, after stayin wake of nights for a week—wrastlin with the question which would be the best, to go or not to go—thinkin about the drove of girls over at old man Larry’s and pickin out the prittiest one in the pack for my own and onlyest sweetheart—I lowed that I would go. After that the mainest thing with me was the riggins and the fixments to put on.

WITH HIS “ RIGGINS ON.”

“ By this time some of the folks at home had fixed me up with a pair of new coperas breeches for Sunday,” Brit went on, “ and along indurin of the week I had took and swapped a right good fiddle to Lum Hankins for a long tail black coat—a reglar Winchester, as Aunt Liza Raiborn use to say—and six bits to boot. That want no rale, genuine, store bought coat, you understand. From the best of my recollection I reckon Lum Hankins must of got it made outen one of his mother’s old black dresses. But at any rate it was a reglar calf wiper, wind splitter and earth sweeper. But the general style and cut of my shirts was so infernal broad and long and full and bountiful like till

durned if I had room enough to wear one with my coperas breeches—which they had fit me as snug as a bug in a rug—and there I was, as the man says in the show.

“So when Christmas come—it was a warm and windy winter day—I clum into my red leather shoes and them coperas breeches, pulled on my long-tail black coat and buttoned it up tight and clost in front so nobody couldnt tell for certain that I didnt have no signs of such a garment—tied a lovely red handkerchief around my neck—put on my hat and sprinkled a few cinnamon drops on my hair—hooked up my little steer, Brindle, to the cart, and lit out for Huckleberry ridge with the riggins and fixments on.

“Say, Rufe, dont you remember that blame little slab-sided, razor-back, wobbledy-legged steer, which I called his name Brindle, and which I driv over to Huckleberry ridge that Christmas day? Well, man, sir, Brindle went all the gaits and worked anywheres, single or double, and then he would also do his level durndest to eat up everything in sight—from a hay stack to a cord of gum stumps.

“A MIGHTY SCATTERATION.”

“When I driv up to the front gate at old man Larry Benton’s that Christmas mornin, by gollys, I was feelin like a four-year-old shod all around, with packs in every foot. Right then I didnt give a continental durn if the creeks all run up stream and meat was going at four bits a pound. I lit out, I did, and roped Brindle to the palins. By this time girls had caught sight of me and here they come. They were all monstrous glad to see me, and I was more than proud to meet with them oncst more. In my bold and reckless and ondifferent way I then leant up agin the gate, whilst the girls they clustered around me like bees around a molasses jug, and we pitched in to have a reglar Christmas confabulation jest amongst us gals, as it were. Everybody was havin sich a felonious good time till I couldnt take notice of anything but the female generation. By and by the girls they got to gigglin and goin on at a scandalous lick. And me, like a dad-burn idiot, I thought it was all because Christmas had come oncst more, whilst the air was full of music and the turkey in

the pot. About that time I felt somethin blowin his warm breath on the back of my neck, and when I turned round to see what was goin on, durn my cats if Brindle hadnt chawed out a full section of my long tail coat, right up and down the back from collar to hem. Right about then a high west wind sprung up behind, and jest naturally shucked off my coat and blowed it clean out into the middle of the big road.

"Now, white people, if anybody ever heard tell of a tremendous confusionment and mighty scatteration, we had it right over there on Huckleberry ridge that Christmas mornin. The girls they blushed and laughed and screamed and made a dash for the house, whilst I lit into my cart, poured the whip to Brindle and we burnt the wind for home."

THAT SAD AND ORFUL DAY.

With that I laughed as I had laughed a hundred times before at Brit Foster and his Christmas story. And as for them Texas fellows, they laughed and laughed till they jest naturally had to lay down and roll over in it. But Brit never could find where the laughin part come in, and there was a far-away solemcholy look on his face as he breshed the tears from his eyes and went on with the story :

"If in the fullness of time it was give unto me to live a hundred years I never could forgit the ups and downs of that sad and orful day. I didn't have a blamed blessed thing in the round created world which I could call my own exceptin my little steer Brindle, and it took my level durndest to keep from killin him on the spot.

"When I got back home I up and told my Uncle Griffin—which you remember, Rufe, my own dear father was dead and gone then, and me and mother we had went to live with Uncle Grif—I told him what had come to pass and bantered him to buy my little steer Brindle. He laughed at me till it was a sin and a scandalation, but I finally at last hornsoggled him into a trade and sold him Brindle for seven dollars and six bits (7.75) spot cash.

"That night I packed up a little wallet which helt all I had in the way of this world's goods exceptin the torn and

tattered remains of that durned infernal old long tail Winchester coat, slipped out of the back window and down through the orchard and run away from home. The next day I made it to Belle's Landin down on the Alabama river and there I struck a steamboat goin to Mobile. I up and told the captain all about the orful time I had the day before over on Huckleberry ridge, and as soon as he could stop laughin long enough he told me if I would promise to tell my troubles to the crowd on the boat he would let me ride with him to Mobile free gratis for nothin. That was a sad and terrible thing for me to tell, but money was money then, and the captain was traded with on the spot.

"When I struck the city I was a plum show to them town folks, and somehow the gamblers they took to me as quick and natural as a sick kitten to a pan of sweet milk. In the run of time I fell in and learnt the game and went to gallopin with the gang. Sometimes the documents have come my way, Rufe, and sometimes they have run from me like a shot. But accordin to what the Scripture says, everything that goes up must come down.

"From the day and night when I left the old home and went forth into the cold world alone, I never have went back to the Panther creek settlement. And what is more, Rufe, by gatlins I never will. Of all the sad days which come and go this is the gonebyest most saddest one to me. Hit never comes but oncst a year and then it brings back fresh to my mind all the trials and troubles and tribulations which come my way that Christmas day over there on Huckleberry ridge."

CHAPTER XLII.

A SUNDAY SERMON.

“Come, cast in thy lot among us.”

Young man, it is preaching time. You need an early Sunday morning sermon. We must have a meeting, a reckoning and a reasoning together. You have ears to hear. Your Uncle Rufus can preach—on paper. Great men like Talmage and Spurgeon and Jones preach that way. And this is a free country. Now then :

You must vote. It is your duty. Not to-day, but some other day. In fact, any day when the polls are open and you have an opportunity. You have neglected this most solemn duty long enough. You have trampled under your unhollowed feet this great privilege too long. You know you have, and it is useless to discuss the question at length. I only want to hold up a barefoot, bareheaded fact, which is part and parcel of your personal history, and get you to take a good look at it. I want to show you a plain, unvarnished truth, unclad, uncovered, unclean and ugly. I want you to consider and reconsider your way. Ponder some. It is a pleasant time of year for pondering. Make haste while the sun shines.

You are free, white and twenty-one. Again I tell you, you must vote, and what I have to say to you is said also to hundreds and thousands of other young men in this country who are as sorry citizens as you are. I am going to run a broad-gauge, fine-tooth harrow—set the backband forward and run her deep, and if some of the older heads fall in the way and get scratched, why so be it. But I am preaching to the young men of your size especially.

“Come, cast in thy lot among us.” If you are a citizen of Alabama, you must be a voter. If you are a white man you ought to vote the straight Democratic ticket every time and all the time. But as I have already intimated in the opening re-

marks, the sorrow is that you haven't been voting at all. You have been playing the ungainly part of a knot on a log. And you are not playing a lone hand, either. Hundreds of young men are just as shabby and sorry in this regard as you are. I write and talk as one up a tree, speaking forth words of truth and soberness.

But you not only neglect a sacred duty and fling away a great American privilege. You make a bad matter worse by rendering poor, little, sickly, puny, mangy excuses for not voting. For instance :

"I don't vote because the tax assessor will catch me on the poll list and make me pay a poll tax."

"I dont vote because if I register my name will get in the jury boxes and the sheriff will drag me up and make me serve as a juror."

"I dont vote because it is useless. It is a one sided game in this country—white against black and the white ticket will be elected without my vote."

In other words :

"I know this is a great country. I enjoy the blessings and protection of good government, but I am too blamed mean and stingy to pay the small sum of \$1.50 a year as a poll tax."

"I know that justice must be meted out, and I agree that good men ought to serve on the juries, but I am selfish and narrow minded, and I shirk that duty along with the others, and just so the jury dont hang me I'm all right."

"I grant you that it is a duty and a privilege to vote, but I am too busy doin nothin to go to the polls. Let me pair with a one-eyed nigger and go huntin. My vote will not be missed."

I'd ruther be a dog, and tree a coon than such a citizen. If you ever expect to be a grown man you must go to growin. If you dont expect to get grown say so and get out of the way. You can play second fiddle to the warts on the body politic.

"Come, cast in thy lot among us." Bright and early in the morning of a life that's worth the livin, if you live it like you ought to, like your Uncle Rufus tells you ; while the dew of youth is on you, and a bob-tailed flush is paintin up the East in fancy colors, streaks of gray, and gold and purple ;

While you are young and straight and handsome,
 And your cheeks are round and rosy,
 While the eager winds of winter
 Cannot whistle through your whiskers,
 While the fires of youth burn brightly
 And the sunshine scatters darkness,
 Scatters sorrow, clouds and shadows,
 As the whirlwind from the northwest
 Scatters leaves and dust and such like.
 While the future lies before you
 Like a new discovered country,
 Full of life, and full of promise ;

While the rains of winter fall not, and the snows of old age come not, with their weight of cares and troubles, aches and pains and rheumatism, loss of teeth and loss of eye-sight, all the various and sundry ups and downs and ills and evils that the fleshy man is heir to ; while you can and while you ought to, for the safety and protection of yourself and of your country, cast a ballot every clatter, vote the Democratic ticket, vote it late and vote it early, and if necessary often.

You may be free, white and twenty-one, all wool a yard wide and a mile high, but you are not a well grown, full-fledged man unless you vote every time the roll is called. Dont be afraid to show your hand. Dont shirk, and shun, and trim, and dicker. Dont be a straddler from Straddlersville. The top rail is always sharp and rough and full of splinters. Let somebody else ride it. When your country calls "show down" and play your hand wide open.

Years ago I had an old friend by the name of Wilson, Judge Wilson we called him, who lived down among the red hills of Butler county. He was a justice of the peace, and so we called him judge. Like the rest of us, the old judge had his faults and frailties. One of his most unhappy frailties was that he got drunk every time he went to town, and one of his great faults was that whenever he got mellow with whiskey he got correspondingly religious. But he was honest and brave—a regular open-faced stem winder. He had voted the Democratic ticket on every election day for forty years. He wasnt afraid of a cowpen full of jury boxes and poll taxes. He would fight a stack of wild cats any day, and do his own tacking. On one

occasion he had been to town and steamed up, and on his way home he had to pass by a country church where a Methodist protracted meeting was in progress. He dismounted, hitched his horse, walked in the church and took a seat in the amen corner, front row. The preacher preached, and rising to a high pitch of eloquence, he exclaimed :

"Show me the drunkard ! Show me the drunkard ! Of all men on God's green earth, the lowest, the dirtiest, the most desperately wicked, the most pitiable, but the most disgusting. Show me the drunkard !"

The old judge arose to his feet, braced himself on his hickory crook, looked the preacher straight in the face and calmly said : "All right, parson, here I am."

The parson had realized on his investment somewhat sooner than he expected and was considerably taken back. But somebody motioned to the judge to be seated and he obeyed. The preacher proceeded with his sermon and pretty soon he arose to another fervent strain of oratory :

"Show me the hypocrit !" he exclaimed. "Show me the hypocrit ! of all the sin-cursed creatures in this world, the meanest, most contemptible, spurned and despised of all men. Show me the hypocrit !"

At this point the old judge again broke into the proceedings. Leaning over the bench he looked at Deacon Joiner, famous in the neighborhood as a hypocrit, punched him in the short ribs with that same hickory stick, and said : "Deacon ! Deacon ! Why in the devil don't you get up and show your hand when you are called on ?"

"Come, cast in thy lot among us." Show your hand. Get up when you are called on. Vote for your party. Vote for your principles. Vote for Democracy pure and simple. Vote for tariff reform and reduction. Vote for your wife and babies, or your sweetheart, as the case may be. Never mind about your Uncle Rufus. When the general roll is called he'll be there. Vote for yourself. You may want other people to vote for you some of these days. Turn about is fair play. Vote for your convictions and desires. Vote for your country and your sires. Vote till the last durned foe retires. By golly, vote !

CHAPTER XLIII.

HOW TO "WEAN" A MAN.

Hit raley seems strange and pecurious like to me that many a good woman, which could break a yoke of oxen or a mustang pony, and wean a steer calf or mule colt in three days, cant break one triflin man and wean him from drinkin whisky. As to me, I have never had to try my hand in that particlar kind of business, and maybe it mought be more harder than it seems and looks like on the first flush. But I have seen three or four women in my day and generation which could wean a man from "white ink" and "sperits-of-cats-a-fightin." I have likewise also took notice of some cases where it took a woman and the good Lord both to turn off the job in proper shape.

And now in orderment to lend a helpin hand to the risin generation—and more particlar to the good women of the country—I will give out the mainest facts in some cases which have come to pass down in the Rocky creek regions.

BUCKETS AND BOTTLES EVERYWHERE.

One of the hardest and most terrible drinkers that ever had his day and generation in this country was hook-eyed Billy Stringer. He didnt cuss and he didnt fight and he didnt gamble with the "documents," but when it come to drinkin whisky Billy he was there. He was right tolerably well fixed in regards to this world's goods, with what had come down to him from the family, and he got somethin in the way of boot when he married. But he would pole off down to the Cross Roads every day the Lord sent, exceptin Sunday, and went in deeper and deeper with whisky till his farm was goin to rack and ruin, and it looked like nothin but starvation ahead of him and his family.

Finally at last in the run of time his good wife took it into her head that maybe she could break Billy and wean him from whisky. The next mornin bright and early Billy went down to

the Cross Roads as usual, and then late along in the shank of the evenin he comes home drunk as usual, and if anything maybe a little more drunker than usual. He had worked up such a tremendius bad case of it that day till it took two men to tote him home and put him to bed.

Soon as ever Billy got to sleep good Mises Stringer put out she did and went down to the grocery at the Cross Roads and bought fifteen gallons of mean whisky, which she told the store-keeper to send it right up to the house.

When Billy woke up and come to his senses about daylight the next mornin he was feelin—but maybe you mought know how he felt. And if in case you dont there are plenty of people in this country that could tell you if they was only brave and honest enough to spit it out. He felt like he could bite a mill pond in two at one lick and then swallow up both ends of it. The first thing he saw was a water bucket with a gourd in it settin in a chair by the side of his bed, and he went down after some water. But instead of water he got a gourd full of whisky. And Billy he didnt want any whisky to speak of right then. It was most too soon in the mornin. He then turned over and there was another water bucket with a gourd in it on the other side of the bed. Oncst more Billy went down after water and come up with whisky. Presently he got up to hunt for water, and he found buckets and bottles all around. But it was all whisky—whisky, whisky everywhere, and narry drop of water. Then Billy he opened up and called for his wife, and wanted to know who in thunderations had set em up to so infernal much whisky, when the mainest thing with him was water.

“It was me that bought the whisky, Billy, and I bought it for you,” says his gcod wife.

“You must be drunk yourself, or either goin crazy,” says Billy.

“No, I ain't drunk, Billy,” says she, “and I ain't goin crazy so far as anybody knows of. But when the time comes I want you to die at home. It seems like you are dead bent on killin yourself with whisky, and it has pestered me powerful to think that you mought die in that dirty, filthy grocery down there at the Cross Roads. So I went and laid in a full stock of

whisky, and you can now git it without ramblin down there after it. I bought it and paid for it with my own money, Billy, and brought it home for you. It is yours, Billy—every drink and every drop of it is yours. So you can wade right in now and help yourself. You know how hurtin and heartbreakin it is to me for you to be forever drinkin and carousin around. But if nothin else will do you but to keep on till it kills you I would a whole lot ruther for you to wind up the business right here and die at home."

And do you know it makes me happy clean down to my socks to tell you that hook-eyed Billy Springer didn't plunge in and kill his fool self then and there? Well, he didn't. Bless gracious, he ain't dead till yet. But he is a sober man now. Henceforwards from that day he never has took a drink. His wife weaned him. She weaned him good. And I have now told you as best I could how she turned off the job.

AND SHE WENT WITH HIM.

Old man Steve Bradley was way up clost to sixty before he went busted with whisky. But he kept on foolin with it and nibblin at it till by and by it throwed him—which it most in generally always will do that if a man only nibbles long enough—and then it seems as if he pitched in to make up for lost time.

Aunt Melindy (that was old man Steve's wife, and may her tribe increase forever) she cried and she begged till she saw that cryin was only vanity, and beggin was nothing but vexation of spirit. But by gatlins, she weaned him you understand, and she weaned him for good.

At that time old man Steve was jest naturally livin down at the Cross Roads, all to his board and washin. It had now been three days and nights since he was sober enough to go home. He was drinkin like a fish and spendin his money as free as water runnin down hill.

One night a little past supper time, whilst old man Steve and the gang was settin around the fire drinkin and tellin smutty jokes, who but Aunt Melindy walked in and pulled up a chair and took a seat and set down. Old man Steve and the rest of the gang looked like they didnt know whether to break and

run or back out through a knot hole in the floor. But presently the old man rallied his nerve and went on to say, says he :

" In the name of all creation, Melindy, what in the devil are you doin here?"

" I have come to jine your pore old wife's husband," says she. " Steven Bradley, we have now been married clost on to forty years, and my right and proper place is by your side. My children are your children, and your home is our home. Your God is my God, your country is my country, your people must be my people, and your company shall be my company. Where your wayward feet wander amongst the meanderin scenes of this vain and fleetin world, there will I likewise also leave my tracks. I have cried my old eyes red and dry, and begged you to quit your drunken ways and go home and live with me, but you wont go. So I have now come to live with you. Accordin to what the Word says, we are one in the flesh, and if you live in a hog wallow I will live with you, and if you go to the dogs and the devil, I will likewise also go with you. When you drink I will drink, and when you die by the blessins of God I hope to die with you."

Old man Steve then up and told the rest of the gang not to pay no attention to Melindy—that she was out of her head, but he would git her off home now presently. He told her to shut her fool mouth and go back home where she belonged, but she wouldnt budge narry inch. When old man Steve called the gang to take another drink she joined in with them as big as life. The old man stood it as long as he could, but finally at last he caved in and broke down.

" Come along with me, Melindy," says he, presently, " and let's go home."

Then he went home, and she went with him. That was fifteen years ago, next March, but when old man Steve Bradley left the gang that night he left em for good. Aunt Melindy had weaned him, and she weaned him forever,

WEANED WITH A " MIDDLELIN OF MEAT."

I have met up with one man in my day and time that had been weaned from drinkin whiskey with a middlin of meat—

forty pounds of bacon. It was Nath Hankins, which used to live somewheres down in the Flat Woods. I was along with Andy Lucas and Blev Scroggins one day when we met up with Nath, and they tried their level blamdest to make him fall in line and take a drink with them.

"You will have to let me off this time, boys," says Nath. "I have quit and I quit to stick and stay. I have forever and eternally buttoned my lips agin the stuff, and honest to God, boys, I wouldnt take a drink for a clear deed to a ten acre lot in Heaven.

"I reckon you all mought wonder what has come to pass to bring such a monstrous big change in the spirit of my dreams, and jest betwixt us gals I will give you the facts.

"I got broke from drinkin whiskey with forty pounds of bacon. It all come to pass down there in Murder creek swamp Christmas Eve night of last winter. I had went to town that day and bought a whole passle of fancy stuff for my old woman and the children, and likewise a barrel of flour and a side of bacon for reglar eatin. Naturally of course since it was in the Christmas and the weather was cold as flugins, I bought a jug of spirits. Goin on home that night I took the jug in my lap and held it there and played with it and kissed it most too reglar and frequent, and consequentially by the time I got to the creek I didnt know anything for certain. But anyhow, by some onlucky hook or mercrook the wagon got turned over and all the contents thereof was spilt right there in the swamp. In the general scatteration I fell flat of my back and forty pounds of bacon fell on top of me.

Oncest or twicst I sorter come to my senses and tried to git up, but I couldn't make it. It seems as if I had been in a fight and the other fellow had got on top and was holding me down till I hollered calf rope, and I thought to myself you can whip me perhaps whilst I am drunk and down, but dadblame you, I will see you dead before I holler like a calf.

"Then I went to sleep and there I stayed flat on my back in the mud and water all night long. When I woke up the next mornin I was so tremendius cold and stiff I couldn't move a peg. By hokeys, I couldn't even so much as lift up my voice and call

for help. It was way after sunrise when the boys driv up with the wagon and took that middlin of meat off of me and put me in and hauled me home. I was as cold and stiff as a wedge and frost bit from the top of my tangly head to the soles of my wayward feet. It was two long and weary months before I could leave the bed and tend to my business, and from what the doctors say I fluttered around mighty close to the jaws of death and the brinks of eternity. But as I said before, I have took out and quit, and henceforwards forevermore I belong to the Branch Water Brigade."

There is more ways to kill a dog besides chokin him to death on butter, as Aunt Nancy Newton is so wont to say. And there is more ways than one to wean a man from drinkin whisky.

CHAPTER XLIV.

A LETTER TO THE PRESIDENT.

[The following is the last sketch written by Rufus Sanders before his tragic death. One sketch published the Sunday after his murder the previous week was written months before, and was "copy" laid aside for use at some odd time.]

Gray Dick, our old shawl-neck rooster, had come around and stood on the front doorstep last Tuesday mornin and crowed loud and long and mannish, like as if he was right fresh married to the most loveliest pullet in the settlement. Mother lowed her nose had been itchin powerful that day—which meant that somebody was comin; and itchin on the off side—which meant that it was a man person comin. So consequentially nobody didn't fall over in a faint, and it want in the leastwise astonishin to me when Black Jack Wiggins, of Cyclone Streak, rid up and hailed at the horse-rack about supper time that night.

OUT FOR "GENERAL RAIDER."

"Light and dismount and hitch and come in, Black Jack," says I, and he didn't fool off any precious time in doin as he was told.

After supper Black Jack called the meetin to order and proceeded with the proceedins—which the mainest thing with him was to fix up a letter to the President.

"As you know full well, Rufus, I never was what people mought call a wishy-washy man," the gentleman from Cyclone Streak went on to say. "My doctrine is to see the other man when I can, but if in case I dont see what I want, it wouldnt make any rosy blushes bloom for me to take my own native mouth and ask for it. Now, it would suit me the best in the world to be the general revenue raider for Cyclone Streak. There aint no compellment for me to come over here and tell you somethin that you already know tremendius well—which is to say that the early runnins of the corn flows free and promiscus in that historic strip of country. You dont have to tell me what

you know, and it aint for me to tell you all I know. But the various and sundry things that me and you—both of us put together—do know to a most hellacious certainty—and the things which some people dont know, would make a whole passel, Rufus.

“Over there amongst them hills and hollows, and along the creeks and spring branches, the boys do jest naturally love it, and make it and drink it and sell it—all unbeknowance to the general government. This very night me and you might go and give the signs and call forth a full supply of the reverent stuff—15 years old, if we went in for the age of it—the finest and purest that ever flowed from a gum stump or a whiteoak spring.

“But now what the general government dont know in regards to the people and the ways and means of Cyclone Streak, Rufus, is a large and gracious plenty. Whilst my wayward and wanderin feet have pressed the rugged bosom of the earth—every inch for miles and miles around—the general government would git lost twenty times before she could cross the secont creek and find her way outen one of them famous tighteye thickets. You must recollect that I was borned and bred and brung up right over there in Cyclone Streak. But in them days it come to pass that the general government was runnin at large and havin a felonious good time, whilst the people they paid the freight.

“Now you can see how I would mortally hate to give the boys away and be forever shut out of the game myself. But there is money in it, Rufus, providin the general government can find the right man to tend to the business. I have writ to the president one letter wherein I told him I wouldnt to say mind takin the job if the government would give me so much in spot cash and a half intrust in the stuff which I mought pick up in the rounds. Up to this time the president never has responded back. Now, it mought be that he had to hire a lawyer to read my letter and is only waitin till he can draw the necessary salary and raise the fees and costs. But you know I aint so very many when it comes to writin, and I want you to fix up another document for me. I can talk it out loud and you can set it down in plain United States, and in that way we mought maybe fetch him to taw.”

THE LETTER "WHICH WE WRIT."

So Black Jack he talked whilst I set it down, and this is the letter which we writ to the president :

" ROCKY CREEK, August 27, 1897.

MISTER PRESIDENT—

MY DEAR SIR—Oncst more I seat myself with pen in hand to make some further scatterin remarks to you in regards to the people and things in Cyclone Streak. You never have responded back to the letter which I writ you some time ago. But if you will excuse haste I will freely forgive you and vote the ticket straight at the next election.

" I would love the best in the world, Mister President, to be general revenue raider for Cyclone Streak. And most anybody can tell you that of all the men in the regions around Black Jack Wiggins is the man for the place. You neednt to have any earthly doubts in regards to that, Mister President. The man which knows the woods is the man to blaze the way. In the fulness of time I have went the gaits myself. I know the ropes. I have learnt all the links. I wouldnt even sorter make out like I know everything, Mister President. Pick me up and drop me down 60 miles from Cyclone Streak and I wouldnt know anything for certain. I dont know a blame bit more about our great and growin country at large than your general government knows about the lay of the land in Cyclone Streak—which is little more than nothin, Mister President.

" Now, you mought think that some of your fellow citizens over there in Cyclone Streak are runnin wildcat stills and makin moonshine whiskey. A heap of people think that, Mister President. The revenue raiders which the general government sends out from town think the same thing. But you only think it, and they only think it, whilst I do essentially know it. As far back as my recollection will reach the boys in Cyclone Streak have been runnin white ink and sperits-of-cats-a fightin, and I am one of the boys, Mister President. Many and many a year ago I learnt at my dear old father's knee that the shuckin of the corn meant meal in the barrel, and likewise also sperits in the keg, Mister President. It didnt take me forever to

find out that when the apple blossoms bloomed and the peach tree turned red in spots they stood for plenty of sweet things in the pantry first, and then a few drops of brandy to make the sugar and water taste better along in the dead of winter.

"I am knowin to various and sundry things that have come to pass unbeknowance to the general government. I can go over in the fork of Panther creek and the Patsalaggy river and buy the very best of goods—a hundred proof—15 year old—handmade with spring water—fine and smooth as silk and satin, Mister President—for two dollars a gallon. I dont mind tellin you that, jest between us girls, as it were, and if you can stand off the freight I mought send you some samples. But I would ruther you dont say nothin about it around headquarters—particlar whilst congress is in session—for fears the whole durn shootin match mought move down into Cyclone Streak. The fruit didnt turn out much and the corn crop is ruther short this year, Mister President. Whereas, the committee on foreign relations have bought new Winchester rifles and passed a resolution in favor of the free and unlimited distillment of plain American whisky.

HOT STUFF AND HARD TO HANDLE.

"Oncst upon a time the general government took and sent a revenue raider down here to run out old man Wash Phillips—which at that time the old man was runnin a big still down in the forks, and sellin the producements thereof wide open and promiscus. The raider made a deal with me and give me \$50 to show him through the swamp so he could see Wash Phillips at his place of business.

"Next day I went with him and he found his man doin business at the old stand. All I had to do was to shut my off eye at Wash and all was lovely at the confluence of the streams. The raider wanted me to tarry around and watch the sperits till he could take the prisoner out and turn him over to his partners, when he would confe back and smash up the shebang. I knowed tremendius well the sperits wouldn't hurt me, and I didn't have no serious doubts but what the raider would soon come back and fetch Wash Phillips with him. Mister President, the devil him-

self, if he was a stranger in Cyclone Streak, couldn't find his way outen that swamp without a map. Naturally, of course, old man Wash didn't have to take the lead and blaze the way out, and the raider was as bad lost as a blind dog in ten acres of tall oats. Consequentially after ramblin around for about three hours he come right back to me, and Wash come with him. Then the general government wanted me to go ahead and lead that which was lost back to the open road. But we never put that in the trade and I didn't have to go. The raider cussed a few fervent stanzas and then took Wash and tore off through the swamp oncst more.

"Hit was way along in the shank of the evenin then before they returned back to first base, but they didn't fail to come, Mister President. By this time the raider was foamin, furious mad. He left me and Wash both there at the stand with the sperits and swore by the 12 epistles he would get out of that infernal place if it took a week and come back with men enough to clean out the swamp. That suited me and Wash. We had plenty of plain grub to eat and somethin more better than branch water to keep off the chills. We didn't have to go. The rider he went off and was gone all that night and all the next day. The next time he come up we ask him where he had been—which he then cussed another lurid lot and said nowheres in particlar. He had jest simply been roamin round and round, Mister President, in that dismatic swamp—plungin and tearin through canebrakes and tighteye thickets till you mought think he had rid a whirlwind through Cyclone Streak. He wore a pair of ragged shoes on his feet. He wore a new set of chin whiskers and a look of pluperfect disgust on his face. But nothin more, Mister President—nothin more to speak of.

"On the third day the raider made another trade. He lowed if me and Wash would take him out of that infernal swamp, give him a few plain clothes and say nothin about it, we could keep the sperits and take the durned old machinery and go to a warm and foreign country with it. We turned him out, and we kept the sperits and the machinery, Mister President. But we aint gone nowheres till yet.

"The onlyest time the general government ever put the fix-

ments on me, Mister President, in somethin better than thirty years—which in the main time I have run and sold and climbed up around barrels and on top of barrels, and hit the finest in the woods—was up there in the hills amongst the headwaters of Caney branch. Me and Bud Travis had went over that mornin and made a little run—which we both then felt rich and branched off into a game of draw poker. By-and-by I heard the raiders comin, but I couldnt budge narry inch right then. There was fourteen dollars and six bits in the pot, Mister President, and I helt four aces with flushes barred. Presently Bud called to me to show down, and jest as I throwed my hand to the pack and raked in the pile the raiders closed in on us with their papers on compellment.

“ But that was the onlyest time in the history of the Cyclone Streak that Black Jack Wiggins ever got caught with his finger in his mouth, as it were. I mention these things, Mister President, in orderment to let you know that the boys of Cyclone Streak are hot stuff and hard to handle.

THE WAY TO STOP IT.

“ Finally at last, Mister President, the way to stop the free and unlimited distillment of moonshine sperits and wilddcat whisky in Cyclone Streak—unbeknowance to the general government—is to sail in and stop it. You want a man for general raider that can bunch the machinery and round up the shiners and wipe out the whole entire business at one fell clatter, as it were. And in that case you can get my company, Mister President.

“ The way you run it now the general government will pick up a man now and then, and smash a still here and there. But that wont stop the business. The boys dont give a continental durn for those slight interruptions. Some will come and some will go, whilst the free and unlimited distillment of sperits-of-cats-a-fightin will go on forever in Cyclone Streak. Bud Travis says he can make a trade with the general government to spend six months in jail every year, and if they will give him six months to run his business in Cyclone Streak he can beat six cent cotton clean out of sight. And Bud ought to know, Mister President.

" So long as a man can take a bushel of corn and run two dollars' worth of whisky—unbeknowance to the government—the boys dont particlar mind them little annual visitations from the city raiders. But if you raley mean business, Mister President—if you want a man for general raider that can dreene Cyclone Streak as dry as a powder house before Christmas—I am the huckleberry you are huntin for.

" Yours truly,

" BLACK JACK WIGGINS."

" P. S.—Mind you now, Mister President, I dont essentially believe it is any of your official business what the people do with the corn which grows on their own native soil. And in case you dont need me as general raider for Cyclone Streak, I do most fervently hope the boys will run 300 barrels before Christmas—and all unbeknowance to the general government.

" B. J. W."

Now as for me, I dont know what the president will think or say or do when he reads that secont letter from Cyclone Streak. But at any rates, it aint my funeral, and I wont have to ride feet foremost at the head of the procession.

RAKINS AND SCRAPINS.

JUDGE DARGIN'S SERIOUS THOUGHTS.

When Judge Dargin was chief justice of the supreme court of Alabama Ben Wade run a stage coach line from Montgomery to Bell's Landin. At that time Ben Wade was particular handy with the ribbons and called himself the "durndest best stage driver in the South." One mornin Judge Dargin come up from Mobile on a steamboat and got off at Bell's Landin to take the stage for Montgomery. Ben Wade had a great way of pickin up fine, fiery young horses to work in the lead. With a good set of ribbons and steady horses at the wheels he lowed he could handle the wildest sort of youngsters in the lead and take the wire edge off with one trip.

"Ben, ain't that off creetur in the lead jest a leetle bit fractious?" says Judge Dargin before gettin in the coach.

"Not any worth mentionin, judge," says Ben. "He feels his oats some and the frosty mornin has put a wire edge on him, but that will soon wear off. With steady horses at the wheels and Ben Wade on the box you can crawl in, judge, and make yourself comfortable."

"All right, Ben," says the judge. "It is your coach and your creeturs, and if you don't know your business you ought to take out and tend a night school."

With that the judge crawled in, Ben Wade tightened his lines, cracked his whip and away they went. Presently they struck a long smooth road, with a heavy down grade and the horses goin in a dead run. The first thing old Ben knew or before he knew what was goin on that fiery, fraction lead horse had flew the track, and team and turnout went tearin and plugin and crashin through a black jack thicket. The coach was upshot and busted up into kindlin wood. Old Ben was on the box and was considerably stunted by the heavy fall he got. But the judge was inside the coach, and when at last he got out he

looked like a man that had rode a thrashin machine through a hurricane. He was still alive and breathin, but that was all. They picked him up and took him to a house close by and sent a runner after a preacher. When the preacher got there they thought the judge would die, though at last he pulled through and got well.

"Judge Dargin," says the preacher, "I would like to know what you thought while the coach was crashin through the thicket and you was lookin to be hurled into eternity every minit?"

"Well, parson," says the judge, "I had some awful serious thoughts."

"Tell me about it," says the preacher, "so when I go forth to preach the gospel to my people I can tell them what Judge Dargin, the great lawyer and the chief justice of the supreme court of Alabama, thought when he was brought face to face with death and eternity."

"Well, parson, if you must know," says the judge, "I thought if I but only had Ben Wade in the bottomless pits of hell I would choke the life outen him, goldarn him!"

THE FIRST "WHEEL" AT ROCKY CREEK.

But that want all that come to pass in the settlement last week—not by a whole tremendius big lot.

A town man come through the settlement ridin of a wheel as he called it, and scatterin death and ruination everywhere he went.

Old man Mart Mayo was goin to town in his ox wagon when he met the thing down there in the old stage road. And bless gracious his oxen broke loose and run away and spilt seven dozen eggs, four bushels of potatoes, eight pounds of fresh butter and one man. When old man Mart recovered and come back to his senses sufficient to seek that which was lost he found the remains of his wagon three miles down the road, and when he caught his oxen the next day they had hid out in a canebrake way over there on Murder creek.

Old Mises Simpkins she was out milkin the cows that mornin when the town man rid by on his wheel, and about the next thing she knowed she didnt know anything at all scarcely. She got to the bars ahead of the storm, but there she fainted and fell over in it, and when the cows had all passed over and they picked the good old lady up she was more dead than livin. The doctors are still tendin on that case.

Little Bunk Weatherford was plowin in his new ground when the wheel man come whizzin by, and from the general signs of destruction it is my private opinion that him and his mule both got skeered and run away. They tore down 14 panels of new fence comin out of the field, and Mises Weatherford maintains till yet that Bunk come to the house runnin neck and neck with his mule.

On his return back late that evenin the town man stopped off at the Cross Roads to let the crowd see his wheel. Andy Lucas was there as usual, and tanked up on the "white ink" to about six bits in the dollar. And nothin would do Andy but he must ride the "durn thing." So up he got and down he went. The "durn thing" bucked, and when he picked himself up he was eatin dirt and spittin blood all at the same time.

ONE POOR BOY'S LUCK.

That brings to mind the time when Joe Nick Stringer let his big, ugly, awkward mouth pull him into a right bad confusionment with Miss Mamie Lou Pickens.

Now, white people, there was the most awkwardest youngster with his feet and mouth I have ever saw. And what was worse and more of it, every time he went out among the girls he would git rattled in the upper story. It took his level blamdest to hold himself down with only one girl, and when he got caught out amongst a whole passel of em at a dance, or a picnic, or a candy pullin, they would jest naturally give him palpitation of the heart and put him through a cold sweat.

Oncst upon a time me and Joe Nick we went way down there in the river country to a break down dance. For a com-

mon thing Joe Nick would hang out around the edges till the other boys had their fun and got ready to go home. But somehow we had managed to get him in the house that night—right in there amongst the girls, where they were so thick till you couldnt hardly stir em with a hot poker. And as the music and the dance went on and everybody else was havin such a heavin good time, Joe Nick braced up sufficient to take a hand in the proceedins. He didnt know a livin soul in the house but me and three or four other boys. But when they called the next set he pranced right up to Miss Mamie Lou and asked if she would dance with him. She felt back a little, but then she saw how it was and went on the floor with him. Whilst they were waitin for the music to start and nobody else was talkin, Joe Nick spoke up in his loud, manly voice to Miss Mamie Lou and said, says he:

“ You must excuse me, miss, for askin you to dance with me when I didnt know you and you didnt know me. I wouldnt of ask you if I could of got anybody else.”

Well, bless gracious, Miss Mamie Lou she got mad—which nobody couldnt blame her for that—and wouldnt dance nary single lick with him. Joe Nick fooled and fumbled around for a few minits and then went out and rid off towards home, cussin his luck with every breath.

YOUNG MEN, REMEMBER.

A word or two in passin to the young men of our day and generation.

Remember that every man that gits there ahead of the regular crowd has got to know somethin about cuttin across lots.

If you are goin to be a farmer and worthy of the name dont waste any time with Greek and Latin. Learn what you need in your business, and then roll up your sleeves and spit on your hands and pitch in.

Dont wait too long before you choose your walk in life. Strike your bee line and stand by it till the mornin and the evenin of the last day. Know the links. Cut across lots.

Remember that in the blessins of a good government and a free country, there aint nothin too high or too good or too

great or too pritty for the average American boy, if he has got the right sort of stuff in him.

You can make all the money you want and make it with honest, manly effort.

You can git rich and wear fine clothes and drive fast horses and play big Ike in general if it suits you and you pull all the ropes for that pint.

You can marry the prettiest girl in the country if you play your hand right and watch the game clost.

You can run for office if you want to. You can also run from the office if you dont want it.

You can be a justice of the peace, or a judge, or a congressman, or a governor, or a president if you git the votes.

You can have most anything you want if you are willin to ask for it and work for it and pull for it and fight for it.

Learn the links right. Set the pegs to win. Hit the first lick. Fight to whop, Pull steady and hard. Take all the slack out of the traces and let the breechin fly up. Cut across lots.

HANDY STRIBBLIN'S DOG.

Now Handy Stribblin, that married one of the Cross girls, had a fine lookin possum dog and his name was Bulger. The Stribblin boys bought him of Slim Jim Blevins when he was nothin but a three-months-old pup. They all chipped in and paid six bits for him, spot cash. But they soon found out that a possum dog want a very good piece of family property.

When they got married and settled off to themselves, they all wanted to keep Bulger. They had went snooks to buy the dog, and each man owned an undivided one-third interest in him. Bulger couldn't stay with all three of the boys at one and the same time, and they couldn't divide him out and keep him in good shape for runnin possums. And there they had it, till it begins to look like they might stir up a family feud.

William and John at last agreed if they could trade Handy out of his share of the dog they would settle it. They could buy or sell, or either divide the dog's time half and half between themselves. They were both smart in books and could make

poetry right along. Handy was rather dull, but powerful bull-headed. So they fixed up a scheme to beat Handy out.

"Boys, we have all got to say a piece of poetry in order to settle this dog question," says William to John and Handy, "and every piece of poetry has got to have something about possum in it. Me and John will say our piece. If you can't come to time, Handy, the dog is ourn. But if you can come to time right prompt on a piece of poetry, with somethin about possum in it, the dog is yourn."

"I am willin," says John.

"I am sorter skittish about it," says Handy, "cause I ain't much on poetry, but if that's the game you are goin to play I reckon I will have to try my hand."

"Well and good," says William, "so here :

"Possum is a cunnin thing,
He ramble in the dark,
But never knows what runnin is
Till he hear old Bulger bark."

"My time comes next," says John, and he blazed away :

"Possum is a sly old chap,
He drags a long, slick tail,
He eats up all our new ground corn
And husks it on the rail."

By this time Handy was tremblin like a man with the buck-ager. He was afraid he couldn't make up a piece and say it, and accordin to the trade he would lose Bulger if he didn't. He stuttered and stammered some at the start, and then braced up and went on as follows :

"Possum up a simmon tree,
Rabbit on the ground,
Rabbit say you dad-blame
slou-footed, box-ankled,
bench-legged, long-tail,
gray-headed, blaze-faced,
grass-bellied son-of-a-gun,
Shake some simmons down !"

Handy didn't know very much about cuttin across lots, you notice, but he kept his eye on the wire and finally pulls in ahead of the distance flag, and the dog was his.

AFTER SOMETHIN.

I see some folks mighty nigh every day that reminds me of Handy Striblins dog. Of course Handy was mighty proud of Bulger, and never got tired tellin how he won him from John and William sayin possum poetry. He ask several of his neighbors to come over to his house one night along in October and go hunting with him.

"I have got the best possum dog in the country," says he, "and he is also good for coons and wildcats. He will run anything that walks the woods, but a rabbit, and whenever Bulger strikes a trail and opens up the varmint has got to take a saplin or hunt a holler."

The crowd come in that night after supper and they all started out to see Handy's dog perform. They went up in the hills two or three miles, and Handy was hollerin and whistlin and talkin to his dog all the time. "Bulger will jump somethin torectly, boys," says he, "and everwhen he does open up there'll be music in the woods."

About that time they heard old Bulger open up lively. He sounds like he was about a half mile up the hillside and was comin right down towards the crowd.

"Hooray Bulger! Talk to em old boy!" says Handy. "I knew he would jump somethin torectly. That's a hot trail he's on and the meat will soon be ourn."

The next minit Bulger comes tearin along over the logs and through the bushes and dashed by in sight of the crowd like he was shot out of a cannon. But bless your soul, honey, instid of Bulger bein after somethin, somethin was after Bulger. He had jumped a big bear, and the bear had him workin in the lead.

So that is the way with a heap of folks I know. They think they are after somethin, but somethin is after them. They call themselves killin time, but time is killin them. But happy is the man, and wise ahead of his generation, that understands the great art of cuttin across lots. It saves time and saves money. It keeps the old man young, and it makes the young man strong.

" NEVER GOT MARRIED YIT."

" In regards to one thing, I am a right smart like Miss Callie Biggers," says Aunt Nancy, as she went down into her thanky bag oncst more and fished out her darnin needles and a pair of John Andrew's last years socks. " Along in the Christmas there was a tremendius big lot of marryin goin on around in the settlement. Bless gracious, it looked to me like all the young folks had pitched in to git married, and them that didnt marry was courtin and carryin on to beat six bits. The family disease had broke out fresh, you understand, Rufus, and it was spreadin like a prairie fire before a high wind in March.

" One Sunday evenin I had went over to the Biggers place to swap news and pass a few compliments with the women folks. Now, as everybody knows, Miss Callie Biggers is good and sweet and a great comfort to her mother, but she is as ugly as a meat axe, and from general appearments it would seem like she didnt have a seat right up there on a front bench in the amen corner when they handed round the brains.

" ' Whilst the young people in the settlement are marryin off in sich a weavin way,' says I to Miss Callie, ' it looks to me like you mought maybe take up a notion to git married.'

" ' I always did have the notion,' says she, ' but I never is got married yit.' "

THE " NIGGER " SCHOOL MARM.

Miss Manthy come down into the Rocky creek settlement about the secont year after the war from somewhere up North. She took the first nigger school that was ever got up in this county. She had the class fixed so every one knew his place, and she trained each particlar one to answer a particlar question.

She would start with the one that stood head and ask him :

" Who made you ?"

And he would answer back prompt and quick :

" God made me."

She would then ask the one that stood second :

" Who was the first man ?"

And he would answer, " Adam."

And so on and so forth all down the class. Every one had

learnt the answer to his particlar question and said it over till he got it by heart. One Friday evenin Miss Manthy give what she called a little exhibition and several of the neighbors went over out of natural fun and curiosity to see how she was comin on with the school. One of the scholars had to take the bucket and go to the spring after water, and while he was gone Miss Manthy called out the class in Bible study. In the general confusionment she didnt notice that the head scholar of the class was out of place, and so she put the first question to the one that stood second :

" Who made you ?"

" Adam," says the scholar.

" No, no, that aint right," says Miss Manthy. Try it over."

The scholar tried and tried, but he didnt know nothin but " Adam," and " Adam " he would have it.

" Didnt God make you?" says Miss Manthy.

" Nome, he didnt," says the scholar. "Dat nigger what God made has done gone to de spring to fetch some watah."

WHY LARRY JUMPED THE GAME.

It so happened that old man Tommy had been to the legislature from our county, and he made a bright and shinin record for straight votes and hard work, but no ringin speeches worth mention. He was sound and safe and the people thought the world and all of him. We wanted him to go back for another turn, but he give it out flat and positive that he couldn't make the race. Then we decided to pick up his brother Larry and send him along to fill old man Tommy's shoes and whoop up a few laws for the good of the country and folks in general. Larry never did go into the race himself, but we entered him and run him and elected him. Well, when he got up there to the legislature he started off with a big flourish and made two or three hair-raisin speeches. But that was about all. The next news we got from Larry he had throwed down his hand and jumped the game. Somebody had introduced a law to keep men from settin fish traps or cuttin down bee trees on other people's land

and the bill passed through. And that was a little more than Larry could put up with and not kick out of the harness. He was missin from the roll call about two weeks, and a movement was made to raise a committee of seven to go out, find him and bring him to taw if possible. When the committee found Larry he was down on the river bank fishin, with poles and hooks and bait enough to last him six weeks. He was arrested by the committee and brought back to his seat in the legislature, but it was all vanity. The very next day he lit out and come back home to old man Tommy's place to stay for good and all.

"Every man to his work, Rufe," says Larry to me one day, when I was smokin him out for leavin his post of duty in the legislature, "and my work don't run in the line of makin laws and savin the country. It is too durn dull and sameful. I am bound to have plenty of elbow room and fresh air and a big range to graze in. My talents run to huntin and fishin and triggerin and trappin around free and promiscus like, and I reckon I will have to live my life out in the way my heart and thoughts and feelins set. We can't go all the same way, Rufe. You must take your road and I will take mine, but I hope we will meet in town."

Henceforwards from that time on Larry stuck to his old trade, and when he want huntin or fishin or trailin for a bee tree you could find him loafin around old man Tommy's place on Sunday, or either sick abed with the swamp fever.

"I would ruther do about jest as I durn please than to be guvner or president of the United States," says he, and he played the game out in that way.

"LISPIN LABE'S" PHILOSOPHY.

"The very next time you git up wrong end foremost in the mornin, and start out for a great fret and swivet, Rufus, I want you to recollect what Labe Waller—Lispin Labe, as all the boys are wont to call him—told his store keeper one day last spring, and let the other man lose the sleep.

"To start with Labe aint no great big shakes as a farmer

nohow. He works hard, but he trades so reckless and heavy. In that way he has been droppin behind considerable and runnin his store account up considerable from time to time and from year to year. One day late in the Spring he went to Bob Willis, his store keeper, and put in his claims for another turn of fertilize. Mind you now, Rufus, he had already got five turns and laid in a whole lot of groceries, and Bob was ruther nervous for fear he would wade in so deep till he never could touch bottom no more.

“ ‘ Looks to me like you mought pull through on what you have already got, Labe,’ says Bob. ‘ If I was you I wouldnt wade too deep in debt. Aint you skeered it will pile up so as to give you too much worriment? Seems to me like if I owed as much as you do, and had no more to show out with, it would break into my rest and make me lose sleep.’

“ ‘ Now, Mithter Willith, dont you pethter your mind about that. You never will hear tell of Labe Waller lothin any thleep in regardth to thith thtore account. No, thir, no, thir! You are the man to lothe all the thleep, Mithter Willith. Yeth, thir, yeth, thir! It aint my time of year for lothin thleep. No, thir, no, thir! And I mutht have another turn of fertilithe. Yeth, thir, yeth, thir!’ ”

FELT LIKE A FOOL.

Good preachin serves some people one way and some another. It makes some people shout and some laugh and some cry. I have seen Elder Newton cover all the ground with one spell.

Oncst upon a time a powerful young preacher come down into the settlement and held a big meetin over at Bark Log. He was a reglar sky scraper, and when he got into one of his weavin ways he could fairly make your hair curl and your blood run cold. Naturally of course the elder was on hand with every foot up and coat tails a flyin. On the first day of the meetin Elder Newton took the young preacher down to the spring and told him he hoped he wouldnt try to preach about heaven. “ I believe everything in the Bible,” says the elder, “ but it aint

for us weakly and wicked human beins to know anything about heaven till we die. When you preachers git up and go on to tell us what sort of a place it is I dont believe a word of what you say, and yet still if you was to preach one of your hair-raisin sermons on heaven I reckon I would shout in spite of all I could do. I dont want to act a plum fool and I hope you wont preach on that subject."

The preacher wouldnt say, but it turned out afterwards that about the best sermon he had with him was in regards to heaven, and on the third day he preached it. He took his text from the place where the Good Book says: "We shall know as we are known." He pictured heaven in general and in particular—that other land of light and sunshine and flowers—where all the good people are goin when we die—where there is no night, but all day time, where everybody will know everybody else, and we will meet all the friends and kin folks that have gone on before. It was a powerful, stirrin sermon, and when the preacher run down and quit everybody was a cryin and Elder Newton was shoutin to beat six bits.

Presently the preacher come down out of the pulpit and went around shakin hands and talkin with the people. By this time you understand, the elder had shouted himself down and was now cryin like his heart was broke.

"And how do you feel today, my dear brother?" say the preacher to Elder Newton. And the elder, between his tears and sobs, answered back:

"I feel like a dadburn fool."

Elder Newton was as honest as the sunshine in what he said, you understand, but he come mighty nigh bustin up the meetin then and there.

A SERIOUS THREAT.

From all I can hear, the Democratic party is now seriously threatened with Jule Nabors. Jule is givin it out through the settlement that he is goin to quit the third party and come on back home to the old lick log.

"I have been gallopin with the third party from the first

jump," said Jule in tellin the boys about it over at the Cross Roads the other day. "Accordin to what the leaders tell me, we have whipped the fight in every election by tremendius big majorities, but the other fellows do the countin and beat us out of the offices. So I have come to the conclusion that any party which cant take a big majority and beat a measly little minority never will stack up anything to speak of. Whereas at the present writin I think I will take out and quit."

So much for American politics.

THEY WENT TO CHURCH IN TOWN.

Oncst upon a time me and mother got rich and reckless, as it were, and went up to the state fair to see the marvelsome sights we had read about, which didn't come to pass. Then little Steve Cowlin—which he is now runnin of a big bank in town, but was fetched up plain and honest as other boys in the Rocky creek settlement—nothin would do Steve and his folks but that me and mother must go and stay with them as long as we could. So we took out and put up and tarried and remained over with them a right good whet. Steve lowed it was worth four bits a day to hear me laugh and talk and see me eat, and he wanted us to hang up our duds and stay till way next spring. If it was so I had to stay in town I would ruther put up with Steve Cowlin than any livin man. I know Steve and Steve he knows me with all my weak pints and winnin ways.

But now presently, in the run of time, things got to coming too scandlous thick and fast and furious to suit me. The next Sunday me and mother we lit out and went to church as usual, but it makes me smile all over myself till yet to think of the curious capers we must of cut amongst all the finery and confusionment in that city church. As we went in the organ grinder turned loose with some of the gonebyest, most solemcholy music I had ever saw. Hanged if it didn't make me feel all over in spots as big as a bed quilt.

Naturally of course I was headed for my regular place in the amen corner, and walkin as high and awkward as a blind

calf in tall oats, but mother was so nervous and skittish till we had to turn in and take a seat the first chance we got. And then bless gracious it come to pass that we had took another man's bench, and the general boss of the meetin come around and moved us into a back seat. That went powerful acrost the grain with me, and I wanted to say somethin in plain United States so bad till I could taste it, but I was tongue-tied then. I always did get tongue-tied in church, and I had a mighty bad case of it that day. It is a disease that naturally runs in the Sanders family when they go to church, and I am rale glad of it.

Now in regards to religion—I reckon we had as much when we got back as we had when we started. I didn't sing narry lick, and mother couldn't even remember the text. Religion is somethin that you feel and don't see, and it aint for me or any other mortal man to say which is which and who is who as to them that have got it. But it raley didn't seem to me like it was floatin round about that day so thick till you could hit it with a stick. The preacher give out one song which started off, to-wit:

“ Let them refuse to sing
Who never knew their God.”

And of all that tremendius big congregation, blamed if everybody didn't refuse exceptin a little crowd up in the loft with the organ and a few scatterin voices in the amen corner.

“They don't run their church business on any such narrow constructed plans as that over at Cool Springs and Bark Log and Pilgrim's Rest, do they, mother?” says I, when finally at last the meetin broke up. “Everything is free down there. Salvation is free, and religion is free, and singin is free, and the benches are free, and the people are free.”

SOME “SECOND-HAND CUSSIN.”

That makes me think of the time when me and Sam Nettles and Elder Newberry went to town together, and for the first time in my life I heard some second-hand cussin.

Sam and the elder went in with their wagons heavy loaded

with cotton and I had took a seat and went along with the elder.

Mind you, it was then in the dead of winter. The rains had fell heavy and frequent, and the roads was sloppy and soft enough to bog the shadow of a buzzard. It was but only ten miles to town, though at that time it took a good team to make it through in a day.

Now Sam Nettles was a bad and wicked man, and every time his wagon and team got stalled and stuck in the mud, or struck a steep hill he would put in to cussin the mules and poppin his whip till he made the air blue and they went out in a storm.

Understand me now, I dont say it was the cussin that got the wagon through, and I know as well as anybody that it was wicked and wrong for Sam to be goin on in that reckless way, but somehow or somehow else he was so handy and so furious with his whip and his mouth, and kept up such a roarin big excitement till the mules jest naturally got skeered and took the wagon and tore out of there.

Now as to Elder Newberry, he was one of the best and most peacefulest of men in the round created world for common, He wouldnt carry on very much talk with his mules, and when he did it was with a smooth and gentle voice. So consequentially we didnt stay in sight of Sam and his wagon more than two or three miles. For a while we could hear him poppin his whip and cussin and goin on with his mules, but by-and-by he got clean out of hearin.

Well, me and the elder, we worked and worried along, as best we could for three or four miles. We had it up and down, in and out, and over and under with four mules, and that miserable bad road, and the elder he would fumble and fiddle and fool around, talkin to the mules like they were so many babies, and gal babies at that, till presently we struck the Travis lane, which was way yonder the worst piece of road on the trip to town, and there we stuck and stayed for two long and mortal hours. It was the elder's wagon and the elder's mules, but I told him if I was a cussin man I would take his place and

carry on that branch of the business—at any rate till we got out of the lane and over the next hill.

Finally at last it would seem like the elder had run slap out to the end of his rope, and I could see that he was frin up considerable around the edges. The next thing I took notice of he had went down in his pocket after a twine string and put a new cracker on his whip. Then he mounted the off mule at the wheel and jest naturally made his whip talk. And I am sorry to tell you, that want all—not by a whole lot.

“As that reckless and wicked Sam Nettles would say if he was here,” says the elder, “git out of here, dadburn your long-yearred, lousy pictures! Goshermighty durn a muddy road and a lazy mule in the winter time! Pick up them feet, dadburn you, and tighten them traces and pull till the breechin flies up and somethin freezes over! Remember where you git your corn and fodder, goldarn you, and tare out and go to town! Goshermighty durn road full of mud and a mule name Beck!”

Did we get through that lane and over the next hill? We got through that lane and over the next hill. Did we go to town that day? We went to town that very same winter day. And Sam Nettles want more than a mile ahead at the finish.

I never did talk it around in the settlement, and I dont say now that elder Newberry ever cussed any on his own hook. But I never can forget one time when a mighty change came over the general tone of his voice, and he quoted Sam Nettles at his mules to beat six bits.

A YALLER DOG TRICK.

The last time I was in Texas I was ridin along the big road in Hill county one day and I met a man. The man was walkin and drivin a pair of mules to a covered wagon. The women and children were stored away under the cover. A little scrubby lookin, long-horned cow was tied to the back axle and followin along behind the wagon. We both pulled up, and after passin some stray compliments in regards to the weather, I asked him where he come from and where he was goin.

“I came from way up in the Pan Handle, stranger, and I

am now on my return back home," said the man, and then went on:

"Year before last the big Pan Handle boom hit middle Texas, which I reckon there never was such a country in the discovered world as the Pan Handle was cracked up to be at that time. Well, stranger, I caught the fever, and I had an almighty bad case of it. I sold out where I was livin then, down in Hill county, and we moved our washin into the great Pan Handle country. I bought a hundred and sixty acres of land up there and settled down. Jest to clam up on the lot fence and look around, I reckon no doubts, stranger, I had the prettiest looking farm that a crow ever flew over, which it seems to me like I would git rich and start a bank account the first year. But about that time it must have quit rainin, and when it did quit it sawed right off and quit for certain. So far as I know it is quit till yet. I had the prittiest farm in the New Nited States, jest to stand off and look at it, but I couldnt raise nothin on it to speak of. I couldnt so much as raise a difficulty on that land, stranger, and when I planted wheat I couldnt raise nothin but sand. So finally at last, I throwed down my hand and pulled out of the game, and I am now on my return back to God's country."

"It is none of my business, maybe," says I, "but I would like to hear from the cattle trade in the Pan Handle. What did you give for that cow?"

"It was a rale low-down, yaller dog trick—the way I got that cow," said the man, "and I dont love to talk about it. But bein as you are a stranger in these parts, I will tell you how it come to pass. It maybe mought make me feel better to let somebody know. I gave eighty acres of that Pan Handle land for the cow. That was the trade as I made it, and it was perfectly fair and square so far. I give the other man eighty acres of land and he give me the cow. But when it come to fixin up the deeds and titles, I found out that the poor devil couldnt neither read nor write, and I jest took and unloaded both eighties—a hundred and sixty acres of that Pan Handle land—on him and took the cow. It was a mean and dirty trick, stranger, but somebody had to own the land."

OLD PETERSON FANNIN'S SERMON.

Old man Peterson Fannin was one of the best men that ever lived and moved and breathed the breath of life in our midst, and he was likewise also a tolerable good preacher. But in spite of all that could be said or done he would gum up the cards now and then by mixin up politics with his preachin. It is true that he was sound in politics as well as religion, but he would forget sometimes that oil and water don't mix. One time old man Peterson went way over into the hill country to preach to a weakly little church that didn't have no preacher, and when he got up he started out in this away :

"Brethren and sisters, when a stranger from a strange country comes into your midst to preach the gospel it is nothin but natural and right and proper for you to ask who he is, what he is and whar he comes from. My name is Peterson Fannin ; I come from Rocky Creek, Butler county, Alabama ; I am a hard-shell Baptist and a democrat, bless God-er ! "

You will notice that old man Peterson's platform was short and sweet, but it seems like to me that it covers all the ground.

TRUE TO HIS FRIENDS.

My friend and fellow servant, Blev Scroggins, has held every office in the county—from constable to high sheriff. He has never been beat in an open field and a flatted-footed race before the people. If you want to know the wherefores and the whence-ness thereof I can tell you—with all of his faults Blev Scroggins is true to his friends. I remember a sad and funny story—which you understand was the cold and sober truth—they use to tell on Blev and Andy Lucas, and it shows that mainest strong point in the Scroggins family.

Blev and Andy had went to town one cool and rainy day in the fall of the year. It was way up in the night before they started home, and by that time they had both tanked up most too free and liberal with "white ink" and "sperits-of-cats-a-fighting." On their way home they had to cross a big deep

gully and walk a single track in crossin. Andy was ahead, and when he started across he lost his balance and fell head foremost in the mud and water. About that time Blev come up and heard a monstrous fuss and flounderin goin on down in the gully.

"Hello, Andy," says Blev, "is that you down there?"

"That's me to a dead certainty, Blev," says Andy, "and it's wet and cold as flugins down here. Can't you help a fellow out?"

"I am sorry I can't, but I can't," says Blev, "cause I'm drunker'n seven fools myself, Andy. I doubt durn serious if I can come across, not to speak of helping you out. But, whilst I can't help you out, by gatlines, I tell you what I can do, Andy Lucas—friend of my boyhood, and my side partner in many clost places and hard rubs—durned if I can't pile in and stay with you."

And into the gully Blev went, and there they stayed till daylight come and they got sober enough to crawl out and go home together.

DANCED OUT OF THE PULPIT.

I reckon maybe you have all heard tell of the brethren and sisters and sometimes the deacons and elders, dancing themselves out of the church. But the Rev. Zeb Newton was the first and onliest preacher that I ever heard of dancing himself out of the pulpit. Now, in his young days Zeb had been a fiddler, and as old Mart Mayo says in regard to Daniel Webster, "he drug a right nasty bow, too."

Well, one day whilst out ridin his circuit Zeb met a man in the road and the man turned out to be a fiddler; and when Zeb started in to talk religion with him the stranger pulled his fiddle and tuned up and went to fiddlin. Zeb held forth at old Snake Hill church the next Sunday, and indurin of his sermont he tried to tell the dyin congregation about the fiddler and his fiddle, and still he didn't want to come right out and talk too plain about it. So he went on at it sorter this away:

"I was ridin along the other day—er, and I met up with a wicked man—er, and he was totin a little, long, black box—er

under his arm—er, and it looks like a coffin—er, but it want no coffin—er, and he took somethin out of that little, long, black box—er, about the color of a red rooster cock—er, and he twisted her years—er, and she says cling, clang, clung, clung—er, and he drug a long stick acrost her bosom—er, and she says, says she—er :

“Some loves a gal that pritty in the face,
But I love a gal that little in the waist,
Put it in the bandbox, save it, save it,
Put it in the bandbox, save it till I come.”

And the next thing anybody knew Zeb was knockin the backstep and cuttin the pigeon wing to beat bobtail right there in the pulpit. It seems like the recollections of that good fiddle music must of took him back to old times, and he forgot all about what he was doin and where he was at. He danced around at such a lively lick till presently he fell backwards out of the pulpit and kicked up a terrible rumpus and confusionment.

The brethren then took and put their heads together and called a church meetin for that evenin and turned the preacher out to run with the goats and dry cattle. Zeb he went on down from bad to worse after that, and it want so very long before we got the news that he was runnin for office over in Tucker's Mill beat.

But whilst preachers are but only human flesh and blood and bones like the rest of us, still they are the salt of the earth, and the yaller-leg chickens will always roost low when they come and put up at my house.

A GREEN CLERK.

I recollect one day a good old farmer from the hill country—one of the sort that totes a sock instead of a pocketbook and pays spot cash every clatter—come in to buy “one starter and two catchers,” as he put it. I told him we didn't have any and there want any in town, whereas he bristled up and went out. I had never heard tell of such a thing as a starter or a catcher, and lowed maybe the old man must be drunk or either crazy. But

presently he come back in the store as mad as blazes cause I had told him he couldn't git a starter nor a catcher when every store in town was "plum chock full of 'em." Come to find out and by gatlins we had plenty of them, too. But what do you reckon the old man wanted when he called for "one starter and two catchers?" He wanted one coarse-tooth comb and two fine-tooth combs—one to start 'em and one to catch 'em. And so right then and there the merchant I was tryin to work for missed a spot cash deal and lost one of his very bulliest customers.

"SAVIN SUKEY" MIXED UP.

"One of these new-fangled preachers has been down through the Panther creek settlement here lately preachin some mighty strange and pecurious doctrines amongst the people," said Aunt Nancy Newton to me the last time she was to my house. Then the dear delightful old soul went down into her thanky bag after a fresh pipe of tobacco and kept on talkin:

"The mainest pint the new-fangled preacher makes is that Saturday, and not Sunday, is the seventh day of the week—the day we ought to remember and keep it holy as the Sabbath. It ruther seems to me like he is jest a little bit late in spreadin of the news. The folks down there are too dead sot in their ways to spile out and start over now. The men folks still go to town and swap horses and drink whisky on Saturday, and most everybody takes a day off and goes to meetin Sunday. We have been turnin the water on that way so long till the old mill wouldnt grind narry lick if we made a change now.

"But the new-fangled preacher has got Sukey Sellers—Savin Sukey, as we call her—powerful bad mixed and muddled up in regards to her Sunday. She wont say he is right and she wont say he is wrong. I raley dont think she knows anything for certain, about it. But she is so skeered that the new-fangled preacher is right and everybody else is wrong, or everybody else is right and the preacher is wrong, till bless gracious she now keeps two Sabbath days holy instid of one. She puts in soon Saturday mornin and runs her Sunday slap through till Monday

mornin. Everybody to their own notion, as one old woman said when she kissed a cow, and if that suits Savin Sukey it is perfectly all right with me."

OLD MAN SIMPKINS' SPEECH.

Old man Simpkins run for justice of the peace in our beat one time. That were many and many a year ago, when I was nothin but a yearlin boy. I dont recollect much about the campaign in general, but I never will forget the speech old man Simpkins made at the wind-up. It was a red hot fight, seems like, but the Simpkins ticket won by a scratch, as it were. The night after the election there was an old fashioned Democratic rally over at the Cross Roads. Liquor flowed free and plentiful, and everybody was hollerin for the winnin ticket. There was loud cries for "Simpkins!" but old Sol he didnt budge an inch. The chairman of the meetin appointed a committee of fifteen to bring forth the Hon. Solomon Simpkins, the grandest old war horse of them all. The committee found old man Simpkins, picked him up bodily, carried him to the stand and stood him up there before the people. The audience stood upon its hind feet, so to speak, and hollered itself sore before the old hero could open his mouth. When the storm was over old man Simpkins pulled down his vest, opened up and says, says he:

"FELLOW CITIZENS: I once was a candidate, but now I am elected. I was out for the votes and got em. For six long and weary weeks I have been lickin your boots, and now you can lick mine."

LICKIN LEATHER.

One time old Andy Lucas, the great horse trader, picked up a fine lookin young horse that went all the saddle gaits and was tip-top in the harness. Old Andy lowed that horse was worth \$200 of any man's money. He was a regular high stepper, swift as the wind and easy as a cradle.

But old Andy thought he saw some weak pints about the horse, so he took and swapped him off to Dunk Strickland,

fifteen miles up the river, Dunk was a sorry manager, anyhow, and it want very long before he got the horse into a lawsuit. They had to prove what the horse was worth, and as it happens Andy Lucas was called in to testify as a horse artist. That was in the good old days when a man had to kiss the Bible before he went on the witness stand, to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothin but the truth, so help you God.

"Mr. Lucas, do you know a big, chestnut sorrel, with flax mane and tail, now the property of one Dunk Strickland?" says one of the lawyers.

"I use to have a passin acquaintance with him," says Andy, "and I reckon maybe I would know him now if I was to meet him in the big road."

"Mr. Lucas, please state to the jury what that horse is worth, accordin to your best judgment."

"He is worth a hundred dollars, takin him like his hair stands," says Andy.

"Mr. Lucas, didnt you say only a few weeks ago that that horse was worth two hundred dollars of any man's money?"

"Maybe I did," says Andy, "but I was jest talkin then, squire, and I am lickin leather on this business."

IT AINT SWEET NOW.

Now, in regards to mother, she was right that day. She most in generally is right. It comes plum natural with her to be right, and all right.

But as to me—well, as yet I am only fair to middlin, you understand. I am a right smart like Joe Nick Stringer was that time he got into the sugar barrel. When Joe Nick was nothin but a yearlin boy he had a tremendius big sweet tooth for sugar. In regards to sugar, he was like a fool drinkin good whisky—he didnt know when to take out and quit.

Whereas and consequently, oncst upon a time old man Stringer took Joe Nick to town, and took him to the grocery store and showed him to the storekeeper.

"There is a boy that has never got enough sugar since he

was born into the world," says the old man, "and I want him to git one good bait before he dies. Turn him into a sugar barrel and let him eat till he gits enough, then weigh up what is left and charge the backage to me."

So the storekeeper he took Joe Nick into the back room, knocked the head out of a sugar barrel and told him to wade in. Late along in the shank of the evenin the storekeeper went into the back room after somethin, and there was Joe Nick, you understand, still packin away the sugar.

"Well, my little man," says the storekeeper, "aint you got enough sugar yet?"

"No, sir," says Joe Nick, "I couldnt say for certain that I have got enough, but I have got down to where it aint sweet."

So I dont make out like I have got enough of fishin and foolin around down on Big Wolf creek, you understand, but at any rates, by gracious, I have done got to the pass where it aint sweet any more.

LOOKIN FOR SALLIE.

Now Uncle Sammy Skinner had a daughter, which her name was Sallie, and she was a spankin handsome girl, to boot. Sallie had a sweetheart and his name was Billy—Billy Thompson, or Thomas, or Tomlinson, or somethin like that, though I aint very much on keepin names in my head.

Anyhow, Sallie and Billy was powerful thick and spooney, and everybody said that they ought to take and git married, or either quit foolin and makin out like there was goin to be a weddin in the settlement. Every Sunday that comes Billy was with Sallie and Sallie was with Billy. He went with her and she went with him, and everywhere they went love was so thick till you could mighty nigh rake it up with a splinter.

One time durin the reglar protracted meetin over at Cool Spring church Billy got lost from Sallie somehow, and he was nosin about and flyin around like a right young calf with its mammy gone to the paster. Presently he rushed in the church, lookin terrible oneasy and excited like. The preacher was

preachin away, callin on everybody to turn before it was everlastingly too late and flee from the wrath to come. But when he saw Billy rushin in the church, lookin like a man that was lost and crushed and generally undone, he stopped and said, says he :

“ My dear, dying young man, are you seekin salvation ? ”

“ I reckon more than probable he is seekin Sal Skinner, ” says Uncle Sammy from the amen corner.

Of course Uncle Sammy was right about it, and plum honest in what he said, but he come mighty nigh breakin up the meetin right then and there. He would of had his say if the resurrection was comin next. He saw a good pint and he was bound to cover it and make it count one.

THE MOST MINDFULEST MAN.

Old man Mose Cranby that use to live over on Huckleberry ridge was about the meanest and yet the most mindfulest man that ever had his day and generation in this green and wicked world. He was tough—tough enough for wedge wood in regards to his general character. He want fitten to keep company with the right and proper sort of people, so he lived and died a wayward and reckless old bachelor.

When finally at last it came his time to die several of the neighbors had come in to set up with him and keep him company during his few remainin hours on earth. In the mornin of the very day he died I took his poor old tremblin hand in mine and told him that the last shower would soon come and he would have to go in. I then went on to ask him if he wouldn't love to be buried over at Pilgrim's Rest church, where his sainted father and mother had slept the last sleep for lo these many years.

“ Who, me, Rufe ? ” says old man Mose. “ You know good and well that I aint fitten to be buried up there at Pilgrim's Rest along with my father and mother and all them good Christian people, and it is too late now for me to git fitten. No, Rufe, that would never do. When I am dead I be-

lieve I would ruther you would take me down to Pine Top and bury me there in the nigger graveyard—that is—providin of course—the niggers don't object."

THE QUESTION OF FREE SILVER.

Aint it plum marvelousome what a whole tremendius big lot some people dont know in regards to the question of free silver? Now as for me, I dont try to make out like I know anything about it, and I have now come to the conclusion that the common run of people know as much about it as I do, and we all know as much about it as Andy Lucas and Blev Scroggins know about the Lord's Prayer. Blev and Andy got into a little red hot private disputation on that pint oncst upon a time.

"You dont even know the Lord's prayer, Blev," says Andy.

"Who, me?" says Blev. "Of course I know it. I learnt that at my mother's knee when I was nothin but a kid."

"Bet you a dollar you cant say it off hand," says Andy.

"I will take that bet and win on a dead certainty," says Blev, and they put the money up.

"Now go ahead, Blev, and let me hear you say it," says Andy.

Then Blev he started off with that beautiful little trundle-bed racket :

"Now I lay me down to sleep,
I pray Thee, Lord, my soul to keep.
If I should die before I wake—

"Hold on right there, Blev," says Andy. "I give it up. The money is yours and you can take it, but by gatlines I had no idea you knowed it."

HAD BEEN WHERE THEY RAISE IT.

That brings to mind the time when Deacon Joiner and Andy Lucas got into a furious disputation in regards to the Scriptures.

Hit was right soon after the committee on foreign relations had went through the Bible and made various and sundry

changes, and the deacon he was monstrous glad they changed the word hell into sheol. But Andy he took the other side and maintained that the committee was either drunk or crazy when they wiped out that plain old American word, hell. So him and the deacon they had it up and down.

"Sheol ain't the word for that place, deacon," says Andy, "and sheol ain't no name for it."

"You are talkin now, Andy Lucas, jest simply because you have got somethin to talk with," says the deacon. "How come you to know anything about it?"

"I know the best word and the right name for it, deacon, because I have been where they raise it," says Andy, with a slow, sly wink.

And then the crowd give the deacon the grand horse laugh.

POWERFUL GOOD AT MILKIN.

They got old man Hiram Lucas, the grandfather of our own dear Andy, on the witness stand one time, with regards to some famous horse swappin case. Old man Hiram was a mighty strong witness and the lawyer on the other side tried his level blamdest to rattle the old man and make him break his gait.

"How old are you, Mr. Lucas?" says the lawyer.

"Seventy-seven years old, squire, and still coverin all the ground I stand on," says old man Hiram.

"What is your business, Mr. Lucas?"

"I am a farmer, squire. Naturally, of course, I swap horses sometimes between drinks, but live on a farm and you mought call that my business."

"How long have you been a farmer, Mr. Lucas?"

"Seventy-seven years, squire."

"You are certain you have been a farmer seventy-seven years, Mr. Lucas?"

"I am plum positive on that pint, squire."

Anybody could of told right then by lookin in the lawyer's face that he thought he had old man Hiram backed up in a clost corner.

"Now, Mr. Lucas, you say you are a farmer—that you are

seventy-seven years old, and that you have been a farmer seventy-seven years."

"That's me to a nat's heel, squire."

"Well, now, Mr. Lucas," the lawyer went on in a fierce and thunderin voice, "will you please tell the court and the jury what sort of farm work you done durin the first year of your farmin life, seventy-six years ago?"

"I dont reckon as how I done very much general farm work that year, squire," old Hiram came back quick as lightning, "but I have heard the women folks say I was a powerful good hand at milkin."

Old man Hiram brought down the house in a heap. Even to the judge had to fall in with the general laugh and confusionment, and the lawyer told the witness he could come down.

"THE SAME DURN FELLER."

In my day and time I have met up with a right smart sprinkle of green people. But by long odds the most greenest man I have ever saw was a long, tall, ganglin rooster that come into the settlement oncst from somewheres down in the river country.

The stranger put up for the night at the Pickens place, which the Pickenses they was all powerful polite and proper people. The next mornin when the stranger got up and come out to breakfast old man Pickens said to him, says he, "Good mornin, sir."

And the old lady then up and said to him, says she, "Good mornin, sir."

Then one of the girls spoke up and likewise also says, "Good mornin, sir."

In the main time the stranger hadnt said nothin and looked like he didnt know what they meant. But by this time I reckon he come to the conclusion that somebody would have to explain.

"Why!" says he, "I am the same durn feller that staid here last night!"

There was one man so green till you could mighty nigh

scrape it off with a splinter, and he couldnt see no use in people sayin good mornin to the "same durn feller" that had been there all night.

OLD MART HAS QUIT.

Old Mart Mayo has now quit drinkin whisky. At any rate, that is what I hear people say. And I reckon it must be so. I met up with one of old Mart's boys—which they call his name Luther—down at the mill the other day. I told him how I was monstros glad to hear that his pa had quit drinkin sperits, and asked him if it was so.

"Yes, sir, I reckon it must be so," says the boy, prompt and innocent like. "I seed him quit drinkin three or four times this morning."

THE TURKEY IN THE POT.

Christmas dinners every day,
Candy pullins every night,
How it starts a man to thinkin
Of the last time he was tight.
Then you kinder smell the kitchen
With the victuals smoking hot—
When the air is full of music
And the turkey's in the pot.

Apple cider in the cellar,
Brandy peaches by the score,
In the pantry stacks of doughnuts,
Custards, cakes and pies galore,
Tarts and fritters, sassage, spare ribs,
And the good Lord knows what not—
When the air is full of music
And the turkey's in the pot.

Then the fiddler tunes his fiddle
For cotillions, jigs and reels,
And the boys feel gay and devilish
With new spring boards in their heels;
And the girls they look so temptin
You mought hug one on the spot—
When the air is full of music
And the turkey's in the pot.

With the fiddlin and the dancin
And the feastin everywhere,
There's a smile for everybody,
Fun a plenty and to spare.
All this talk about "tight money"
And "hard times" is jest dry rot—
When the air is full of music
And the turkey's in the pot.

To the old man it seems hurtin
Not to swell the Christmas breeze,
Cause he feels so dadburn lonesome
With them hitches in his knees.
Handsome girls, eggnogs and sich like
Lead my thoughts off in a trot—
When the air is full of music
And the turkey's in the pot.

